

UNDERSTANDING THE WAR EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENTS: THE ROLE OF FORGIVENESS AND FUTURE PROSPECT.

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ABSTRACT

The fourteen year Liberian civil war left in its wake a disenchanted citizenry most of whom sought refuge in neighbouring countries and elsewhere.

The purpose of this study was to understand the war experience of adolescents, the role of forgiveness and future prospects among Liberian young adults at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana.

The study employed a qualitative approach where semi-structured interview were conducted among thirteen (13) Liberian war survivors. They lived in Ghana and were 25-35 years of age. A phenomenological approach was used in analysing the data.

The findings revealed themes which demonstrate that civil war had a variety of impacts on them. Partly the experiences were painful, involving witnessing atrocities and abuses, loss of parents, reliving the memories of the war, and hardships. The results also indicated that in spite of their traumatic past some exhibited resilience and optimism about the future. The stories showed a great effort to reconstruct their shattered lives yet others finds no meaningful purpose in life. The participants analysed possibilities to forgive their offenders or persecutors in various ways. The basis were for example, religious belief, apology, justice, personal choice and influence by revered leaders.

Keywords: Phenomenology, adolescent, refugees, war survivors, forgiveness

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DFID - Department for International Development

GRB - Ghana Refugee Board

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

SENAC - Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (World Food Programme)

TAPRI - Tampere Peace Research Institute (Finland)

NKJV – New King James Version

UNICEF - United nations International Children Emergency Fund

UNHCHR - United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNESCO - United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural organizations

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

War has been a core phenomenon to human existence and Africa has experienced its fair share of it. Indeed military violence, wars, and political conflict are not a rare occurrence in the region. The periodic occurrence of conflict in Africa has become a peculiar characteristic of the continent (Ajayi, 2005, p. 143 cited in Olaosebikan, 2010). One may ask what the researcher means by war or violent conflict? The conceptualization of war or violent conflict is challenging in African context, because they are constantly evolving new kinds of wars. They can be classified into interstate and intrastate wars. Interstate wars are fought between two or more state governments (Gleditsch, Wallenstein, Eriksson, Sollenberg & Strand, 2002). On the other hand, interstate wars as clashes or border dispute between two or more nations involving armed forces of more than one state resulting in military and civilian casualties (Olaosebikan, 2010).

Typical to contemporary Africa the arbitrary borders created by the colonial powers Musuri (1986) emphasizes that this is the main cause that split the ethnic groups. Interestingly not too many border confrontation or military hostilities have ensued or recorded between two nations on the continent. Few of the interstate wars that occurred on the continent were motivated by territorial acquisitions or disagreement over borders despite the fact that Organization of Africa Unity (Africa Union) charter (1963, Article 2(1) have declared the borders inviolable (Bujara, 2002). The first border war experienced on the continent was in 1964-65 between Algeria and Morocco over the Atlas Mountains area (Bujara, 2002; Olaosebikan, 2010). Currently Ethiopia and Eritrea are involved in border disputes which have led to many fatalities and losses.

Intrastate wars remain the dominant form of conflict in Africa. Sarkees, Wayman and Singer (2003, p. 58) indicated that “intra state wars involve sustained battle, involving organized military contingents capable for effective confrontation, resulting in minimum of thousand battle related casualties or deaths within a single year”. Whiles Wallenstein and Sollenberg (2000, p. 648) on their part view “intra-state conflict as a violent civil unrest between government and

non-government entity over disputed incompatibility with the use of armed forces which results in at least twenty-five battle related death per annum”.

Empirical analysis have shown that these wars are fought based on varied causes such as macroeconomics factors, including unemployment, poverty, income incompatibility as well as social identities involving ethnicity, cultural and religious diversity (Bujara, 2002). Furthermore, political and ideological differences as well as arbitrary borders created by the colonial powers have instigated some of the wars (Olaosebikan, 2010). The desire to plunder the natural resource of the state often times fuel conflicts and wars in Africa (Cramer, 2006). These violent armed conflict have resulted in genocide in Rwanda and serious human rights infractions including multiple atrocities such as horrifying mutilations and torture of greater amount of people in Somalia, Angola, Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) (Mengisteab, 2003).

Several lives have been directly affected as a result of the nature and scale of these armed conflict. A study by Department for International Development (DFID, 2001) reported that between 1960 and 2000 over eight million people lost their lives either directly or indirectly as a result of wars in Africa, of whom five and half million were civilians. Countries like Angola, Eritrea/Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, Libya, Central Africa Republic and Sudan have had continuous instability and domestic political violence (Addison, Le Billon & Murshed, 2001). The consequences of these violent conflicts have not only retarded years of socio-economic developments effort but wars undermine the regions security and stability. Additionally, wars and atrocities may have a severe negative impact on civilians, children and their families (Schauer & Elbert, 2010). This current study focuses on these consequences of wars.

One of the resultant effect of wars or violent conflicts in Africa is the upsurge of large number of displaced people who have become refugee in different countries across the continent. Africa is confronted with the challenge of having to deal with heavy toll of internal displacement and most refugee flows in the world (Jackson, 2002). The refugees' situation seem to be an endless humanitarian ordeal as Mazuri (1979) puts it “refugees are often people voting with feet, mobile

referendum on the march.” Many definitions and explanations have been given to refugees in different literatures, however, the most widely used is the one provided by the United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention. A refugee according to Article 1(2) of this Convention, a refugee is a person who

“As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

However, following the political dynamics in Africa, the Organisation of African Union (OAU) now African Union (AU) broadened the definition. The 1969 OAU Convention, Article I (2) states that, the term

“refugee” shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his [or her] country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his [or her] place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his [or her] country of origin or nationality.”

Jackson (2002) revealed that in the year 2000 eleven (11) million people were internally displaced on the African continent while’s additional three million people were cross border refugees. In 1999 according to DFID (2001) thirteen out of the fifty-three countries in Africa each had hundred thousand (100,000) or more displaced people. Ferris (2011) on the other hand reported as of late 2010 in Sub Saharan Africa two (2) million people were refugees with the corresponding figure for IDPs was around eleven (11) million. Children and adolescents are usually the first to fall victims of these wars because of their vulnerable nature. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone Bird (2007) emphasized that two million children have died in the past decade due to the resultant effect of armed conflict whiles six million have been injured or permanently disabled, revealing the extent to which children have been negatively affected by violent conflict.

Most children do not lose their lives from the crossfire or gunfire themselves, but from preventable communicable diseases that are not cured or treated because the medical facilities or health infrastructure have been ruined by the warfare (Weitz, 2012). This clearly indicates the potential threat of violent conflict to the children's rights to survival as enshrined by the United Nations convention on the rights of children. Their fundamental freedom to grow and achieve their future aspirations in a safe secured environment with their family are also denied when conflict erupts.

The current study deals with Liberian youth who experienced the civil war that ravaged the country. The advent of the Liberian civil war (1989-2003) led many to become internally displaced and many to find shelter in neighbouring countries. Since 1979, when Master-sergeant Samuel Doe toppled the William Tolbert administration in Liberia, through to Taylor's incursion in 1989, up until 2007 when constitutional rule was once again restored, there has not been real peace in Liberia. By the end of the civil unrest, which lasted about 14 years, an estimated two hundred and seventy thousand (270,000) men, women and children had been brutally murdered (Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008). In addition to this, eighty-six per cent (86%) of rural households and seventy-eight per cent (78%) of those in Monrovia became refugees were relocated within the country at least once during the war (SENAC, 2006). Some were able to flee the country to Ghana, where refugee camps were set up by the Ghanaian government, in conjunction with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), in a small town called Buduburam.

The irony of the Liberian situation baffles a lot of people to date. It is interesting to note how a country that was spared the evils and indignities of colonialism created its own internal version. A country that cloaked itself as "the oasis of tranquillity in a continent awash with political crises and civil war": "an African outpost of Western civilization" became a recipe for war (Frempong, 2001). It has been unfortunately like many African countries been torn apart in recent years by civil unrest, ethnic strife and unimaginable despots left to drive the country into ground.

1.1. The Current Study and its objectives

Currently, Liberia is experiencing positive changes, including two successful democratic elections and a steady economic growth. Yet a number of refugees have decided to remain in Ghana despite the withdrawal of their refugee status in 2012 by the UNHCR and the harsh conditions confronting them at the camp. The main aim of the current study is to understand adolescent war experience. Its goal is to learn especially about the subjective war experience of these young adults who spent their youth in war-torn Liberia. How they remember the war, how they make sense of atrocities, and how they construct the impacts of war on their lives. Therefore, a qualitative approach was chosen to give a voice to the youth. This study on young Liberian adults living in Ghana as refugees, wish to uncover ways how that young adults embed their experiences with meanings that are both subjective and reflect cultural aspects (Spruijt-Metz, Gallaher, Unger & Johnson, 2005). It is hoped that by uncovering their experiences, this study will help bring the challenges confronting these refugees into the public domain for action to be taken. The study provides the foundation on which future research could explore experiences of young adults, and adolescents who spent their childhood in the midst of violence, cruelties and life threats. Understanding and knowledge of how war impacts adolescent and children will be enhanced in this study. The main research question is what is it like to live as an adolescent in war?

In order to understand the subjective war experience of these adolescent war survivors and refugees, it is important to study the role forgiveness plays in their lives and learn about their future prospects. The study specifically focused on the Liberian young adults who are living in the Buduburam camp in Ghana, but maybe still carrying their earlier experiences. To achieve the overall objective of the research, the following specific objectives were developed:

- Explore how young adults construct their childhood and adolescence that was shadowed by war and persecution?
- Explore how these war survivors view the future?
- Examine the role forgiveness plays in the lives of war victims or survivors?

1.2. Structure of the study

This research report has six chapters in its entirety. First chapter includes the precise description of the purpose and objectives of research. Chapter two is literature review in relevant researches and texts have been reviewed in order to enhance this current study with the necessary concepts and ideas. Chapter three is about methodology. It expounds each of the procedures undertaken to conduct the research. Field work site, research instrument, data collection and analysis method, research ethics are discussed in this chapter. Chapter four describes and analyses the research findings that forms the fundamental substance of this research. Chapter five includes the discussion, where the major findings of the current study will be analysed in relation to the findings of previous studies in order to better understand the phenomenon of civilians as war survivors. The hope is to strengthen the importance of the research on this field. Finally the concluding remarks with recommendation and possibilities for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter shall review relevant literature on adolescent development and how they view their future. The researcher will also portray some literature on the impact of war on adolescent wellbeing and development. The researcher will further discuss the psychological, physical, emotional and behavioural benefits of forgiveness. There is the strong urge to investigate forgiveness in traditional African context by looking at the oral tradition, three selected tribes in Africa and Ubuntu and South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission. This chapter will conclude by discussing the Christian process of forgiveness.

2.2. Adolescent Development

Adolescence can be a turbulent life phase in which its beginning is characterized by major physical changes and hormonal changes. Steinberg (2005, p. 70) argues that adolescents' cognitive development is the realization of a more fully conscious, self-directed and self-regulating mind. The adolescent progressively start to develop abstract thinking and deductive reasoning, which means having the capacity to use internal images to represent reality. The adolescent makes a transition from the childhood stage of concrete thinking into a stage where objects have to represent ideas for unravelling problems. Abstract thinking gives the independence and freedom to think hypothetically about the future and evaluate several opportunities that might be waiting for realization (Christie & Viner, 2005, p. 301). Although the adolescents can employ hypothetical or deductive reasoning, most often they find it convenient to follow their intuition and impulses.

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical growth (in such features as height, weight, and body changes) and maturational changes in other organ systems. Hormonal changes which includes heightened emotions and sexual desires are part of this development. Williams and Currie (2000, p. 129) argue that the adolescent body shape, which embodies attitudes and shows physical

attributes, plays a crucial or primary role in developing self-esteem and thus having remarkable impact for adaptation. For instance, Williams and Currie (2000, p. 141) analysed the association between self-esteem, pubertal timing, and body image among Scottish school girls of (11-14 years). Their results revealed that those with early pubertal development and low ratings of body image (body size and overall attractiveness) were more vulnerable to low levels of self-esteem.

Social development during adolescent is a time where independence and identity is attained, meaning a period when adolescents embark on the journey to self-discovery. These changes are influenced by the social and cultural demands of the community in which the adolescents live. Although they strive for independence they count on the support of their parents, peers and community in most societies (Christie & Viner, 2005).

2.2.1. How adolescent view future?

Adolescence is an important phase in the development of identity, independence and ambition in life, which shape actions that lay the groundwork for subsequent professional decisions. The idea of identity is diverse and comprises how adolescents envisage what their life will become in future (Kerperlman & Mosher, 2004, p. 188). According Nurmi, (1991 cited in Kerperlman & Mosher, 2004) future orientation refer to the ways how individuals perceived their future in relations to ambition, optimisms and expectations. Adolescents with a positive attitude and optimistic orientation may be inspired to make a painstaking decisions towards a bright future compared with adolescent with a negative and pessimistic attitude (Neblett & Cortina, 2006, p. 797). Those with a positive attitude may be motivated to set challenging goals, strategize activities to achieve those objectives and refuse to be hindered by seeming obstacles and frustrations, but they also prepare assiduously and make alternative plans concerning their future.

Empirical studies have established that positive attitude towards future, including optimism and hope, directly correlated with determination, efficient problem-solving, academic and professional accomplishment, and whiles pessimism leads to depression, failure, and passivity (Peterson, 2000, p. 44). Chang and Sanna (2003, p. 875) surveyed 263 students age between 14-

19, and found the association between optimism or pessimism, recent hassles, and psychological adjustment. Their findings revealed that greater optimism was directly connected with lower level of depressive symptoms and with less hopelessness. In contrast, adolescents who had more pessimistic attitudes were more inclined to experience higher level of depressive symptoms and hopelessness under conditions of high chronic stress than those who are more optimistic under similar stress conditions. A prospective study by Patton, Tollit, Romanniuk, Spence, Sheffield and Sawyer (2011) assessed the effects of optimism on adolescents' health risks in a large sample of 5634 (12-14 years old) from three Australian states. They revealed that adolescents with higher optimism were inclined to experience lower levels of depressive symptoms as compared to those with lower optimism. Wong and Lim (2009) additionally demonstrated that low optimism strongly correlated with depressive symptoms over a longer period in adolescence.

Social and environmental factors can inform the future outlooks of the adolescents. The opportunities, hassles, and resources adolescents' encounter everyday are determined by essential social, structural, and socioeconomic status which in turn influence adolescence future and career choices (Mullan, Duncan, & Boisjoly, 2002, p. 1006). A survey by Elder and Russell (2000) explored the level of outward future orientation among adolescents who find themselves in underprivileged circumstances. They argued that the more optimistic ones look for promising opportunities when their conditions are detrimental and disadvantageous irrespective of their relational ties and strong liking for themselves. The emphasis of the researcher was on economic hardship and the results may possibly be applicable to other social related challenges. The drive and motivation to change his socioeconomic circumstance will inform his outward future orientation especially among resilient and optimistic war-affected adolescent.

Adolescent who are less hopeful about the future are likely to engage in risky behaviour. A study assessed the relationship between adolescents' expectations for their future and health attitudes and educational achievement, and their decision to engage in risk behaviour, comprising early sexual intercourse, selling drugs and weapon use (Mullan et al. 2002, p. 1029). Their findings revealed that adolescents with low expectations are strongly inclined to engage in risk-taking behaviour since the risk they encounter represent to them less 'loss' than to those with greater expectations towards their future.

Nurmi,(1991) theoretically asserted that parents plays essential and integral role in adolescents future orientation by laying the foundation and normative standards that has the capacity to influence their children's beliefs, ambition, aspirations and goals. On the other hand, McLaren (2011, p. 10) perceived availability of family support to have a strong connection with higher self-efficacy, perseverance in overcoming difficulties. A study by McCabe and Barnett (2000, p. 504) explored the correlation between familial factors and future orientation among African-American early adolescents from low income families (N=69). Their findings indicated that adolescents perceived parent's motivation of their future planning positively correlated with their own systematic and comprehensive thoughts about their future. These according to McCabe and Barnett (2000) significantly enforces greater optimism in adolescents. Neblett and Cortina, (2006) investigated the association between adolescents' perceptions of their parents' jobs and their future orientation, and examine the role of parental support (N=415). They found out that adolescent who perceived their parents' experiences or conditions at work as poor and unacceptable, may lead to the weakening of parental support and perception about their future orientation.

A study by Stewart and Suldo (2011) evaluated the relationships between social support (from parents, teachers, and peers,) and early adolescents' mental health, as well as the moderating effect of student achievement level (N=390). They found out that perceived good social support associated with low psychopathology. Results indicated that parental support was the strongest predictor of all mental health indicators, emphasizing the influential role of supportive family in impacting the psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

Finally political violence can affect adolescent view of the future. A research by Seginer (2008) focused on the psychological factors that facilitate adolescent future orientation during political turmoil. They argued on two fundamental basis, stating that future orientation can be better formulated if adolescent developed greater challenge or be resilient. They further emphasize that resilience positively influence behaviour and the construction of future orientation by developing and maintaining hope in the face adversity. They believe that hope serve as a link between challenge, resilience and future orientation.

Ben-zur and Almog (2013) studied Israeli adolescents on the long impact of exposure to war experiences, personal and social resources and cognitive appraisals, on post-traumatic stress and future orientation. They found that high threat was significantly correlated to post traumatic stress and the fear of the future while challenge correlated to high risk taking.

2.3. War trauma and adolescence mental health

War brutalities have devastating consequence on the wellbeing, development and mental health of children and adolescents (Attanayake, McKay, Joffres, Singh, Buckle & Mills, 2009). In war-torn areas they experience losses, witness atrocities and other horrific incidents and feel general insecurities. Hundreds of thousands of children die as a result of direct consequence of war each year (Machel, 1996, p. 5), or they suffer a range of war injuries, some as a result of landmine explosion (Pearn, 2003, p. 167), and disability (Barbara, 2006, p. 891). Children and adolescence are exposed to dreadful and horrific atrocities during armed conflict. Yet longitudinal studies are lacking, so we do not know about long lasting impacts of wars. Several empirical studies used diverse dimensions to examine war experience and its consequence post war adjustment on adolescents.

War related trauma can increase a risk for children's psychopathology especially Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Individuals having PTSD show symptom clusters that include:

Repeated reliving of the trauma, e.g., through intrusive images or dreams of the event or monotonous re-enactment of the traumatic events through play in young children; hyper arousal, e.g., increased vigilance or disturbed sleep; as well as persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006, p. 1198).

A research by Schultz, Jon-Hakon, Sorensen and Waaktaar, (2012) evaluated trauma-related symptoms and mental health between Ugandan adolescents war victims (N= 81) as a foundation for preparation for their re-attendance at school. Their findings revealed that 78% of the

participants exhibited PTSD symptoms of clinical proportion. Neugebauer, Fisher, Turner, Yamabe, Sarsfield and Stehling-Ariza (2008) assessed post-traumatic stress reactions among Rwandan children and adolescents (N= 1547) in the early aftermath of genocide. Their results indicated over seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants at the maximum level of exposure suffered from PTSD. While after ten years of the genocide, Schaal and Elbert (2006) investigated the degree of traumatic event exposure and PTSD among Rwandan orphaned youth (N= 68). Their findings revealed that 44% of the participant shown significant levels of PTSD symptoms.

A comparative study by Okello, Onen, and Musisi (2007) explored psychiatric disorders between abducted (N=82) and non-abducted (N=71) adolescents in Northern Uganda. They established that the war abducted participants exhibited clinically significant symptoms of PTSD, major depression and generalized anxiety disorder than non-abducted youth. Similar studies by Moscardino, Scrimin, Cadei and Altoe (2012) evaluated the mental health between former child soldiers and never-abducted teenagers in Northern Uganda. Their results indicated that the child soldiers displayed remarkably higher level of PTSD symptoms, psychological distress, and emotional and behavioural problems as in relation to their never-abducted teens.

Klassen, Oettingen, Daniels and Adams (2010) examined the impact of war and domestic war violence on the mental health of former Ugandan child soldiers (N=330). They established that majority of the participants reported extreme levels of traumatic war experience, domestic violence and mental health problems. Okollo, Nakimuli-Mpungu, Musisi, Broekaert and Derluyn (2014) investigated the differential roles of childhood adversities and stressful war experiences in the development of mental health symptoms in post-war adolescents in Northern Uganda. Their results suggested stressful war experiences were directly connected to mental health symptoms.

In the aftermath of the second insurrection in Intifada, 229 young Palestinian living in Gaza strip where administered measures of PTSD, depression, anxiety and coping by Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Ghannam, Whitcome and Hein (2007, p. 724). Their findings demonstrated that 95% of the respondents were shown as having developed PTSD, 40% reported mild or extreme levels of depression, 95% were classified as severe levels of anxiety while 70% exhibited

undesirable coping response. Other studies like Derulyn, Broekaert, Schuyte and Temmerman (2004, p. 862) also found 97% of 71 former child soldiers in Uganda to have symptoms of PTSD. Similar studies conducted by Amone-P'Olak, Garnefski and Kraaij (2007, p. 665) came to the conclusion that nearly all former child soldiers of Uganda experience posttraumatic stress symptoms of clinically significant magnitude.

Jong, Mulhern, Van der Kam and Kleber (2000) evaluated the war experiences, physical abuse and related psychological pathology among fifteen (15) year old adolescent Sierra Leoneans (N=245). The survey results demonstrated 50 percent of the respondents lost close relatives, 41 percent actually witnessed death of people, 54 percent witnessed events of torture, 41 percent saw people being executed, 32 percent (attempted) amputations, 28 percent saw people being burnt in their houses, and 14 percent saw people being publicly raped. Almost 99 percent exhibited high risk of PTSD symptoms. Similar survey was replicated in Rwanda by Dyregrov, Gupta, Gjestad and Mukanoheli (2000) among adolescents affected by the genocide. Their results indicated participants posttraumatic reactions was related to loss, violence exposure and most importantly, feeling their life was in danger.

Additionally, other psychiatric disorder are prevalent among war-affected adolescents especially anxiety disorder, depression as well as aggressive behaviour and disruptive challenges. A study by Qouta, Punamäki, Miller and El-Sarraj (2008, p. 240) explored the association between children experience of military violence and it related behavioural problems in two Palestinian samples. Their findings indicated Palestinian children exposure to extreme military violence significantly or strongly correlated with extreme levels of aggressive and disruptive behaviour.

It needs to be stressed though, that not all children and adolescence exposed to war or political violence experience mental disorder. For example, despite high rates of exposure to violence, in a survey of war-affected youth (SWAY) in Northern Uganda conducted by Annan, Blattman and Horton (2006, p. 10), levels of emotional distress were remarkably low to average among majority of the youth. Regardless of the extreme exposure to trauma, Klassen, Oettingen, Daniels and Adam (2010, p. 1107) in their cross-sectional analysis of 330 Ugandan child soldiers. They found out that almost 30% of the participants demonstrated posttraumatic resilience as

determined by the nonexistence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and clinically significant behavioural and emotional challenges. Youth who survived the Sierra Leone war had higher levels of anxiety and hostility however, they demonstrated greater confidence and prosocial attitudes (Betancourt, Borisova, Timothy, Brennan, Whitfield, De la Soudiere, Williamson and Gilman, 2010). The reasons for this contrasting results of studies on war-affected youth is uncertain, however, it can be attributed to methodological reasons.

2.3.1. Risk Factors

Researchers emphasize that children responses to war trauma are mediated through their development stage, family, relations, and cognitive and emotional ways of coping. Therefore the experience of a traumatic event of a growing child can significantly impact their coping and adaptive mechanism, innate mechanisms for modulating aggressive and disruptive behaviour as well as relating to others (Shaw, 2003, p. 238). Children depend on adults for affection, protection, attention and empathy to develop (Barbara, 2006, p. 891). The bond between children and parents develop but are often difficult in times of war and armed conflict and this makes the children more vulnerable.

First, separation from parents is one of the parental factors that constituent a risk for mental health challenges among refugee children who experience war and displacement. Children of all ages experience anxiety, and in some cases panic, if separated from the people, usually parents who represent their protective or secure base (Waters & Cummings, 2000, p. 168). Macksoud and Aber (1996) assessed the war experience of Lebanese adolescents (ages 10-16) and the direct correlation of their traumatic experience with psychosocial development (N=224). Their experience include being a victim or witness of torture and violent abuses, loss of family or relations and being exposed to heavy bombardment or fighting. Their findings reveal children who were separated from their parents reported more significant higher depressive symptoms. Also Geltman, Grant-Knight and Mehta (2005) established a strong relationship between separation from family and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Betancourt et al., (2010) assessed the socio economic position, reintegration, age and attendance at school among war affected Sierra Leonean children (N=260). Their results indicated that participants losing a parent was strongly correlated with high rate of depression and anxiety. Girls who were sexual violated displayed significant levels of distress and hatred but not depression. They further argue that boys who were involve in the shedding of blood, execution or harming others during the war reported higher levels of depression, anxiety and hostility symptoms.

Second, it is also important to note that poor parental mental health can be an impediment to the psychological recovery of war affected and displaced children. Particularly the mothers' health is crucial. Poor maternal mental health characterized by high PTSD and depressive symptoms, was found to correlate with children's psychological distress among Palestinians (Qouta, Punamäki and El-Sarraj, 2005). Thabet, Tawahina, El-Sarraj and Vostanis (2008, p. 196) explored the exposure to war trauma and PTSD among 200 parents (both father and mother) and 100 children living in the Gaza strip. Their findings suggest that both war trauma and parents' negative emotional responses were significantly related with children's increased PTSD and anxiety symptoms.

Third, development of children in displacement is at risk although many exhibit remarkable resilience and several strategies to deal with the continuous exposure to daily stressors. A follow up study explored the effects of displacement on the psychosocial wellbeing of children living in a refugee centre in Zagreb, Croatia (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998, p. 190). Their findings revealed that after six months of displacement, still many children exhibited significant levels of stress related symptomology, negative behaviours and emotions. They further revealed that the mothers reported that 16.4% of the children started to have concentration difficulties. Thapa and Hauff (2005, p. 675) also found significant amount PTSD, depressive and anxiety symptoms among war affected internally displaced people in Nepal a low-income country.

Finally, one of the foremost misfortunes of collective violence is social disruption, which contributes to economic hardship that has a negative effect on displaced people mental health (Khamis, 2005, p. 91). According to Khamis (2005), it is a direct cause of distress and also

indirectly leads to remarkable reduction of possessions and belongings that may serve as a buffer against the effect of the traumatic events. Khamis (2005, p. 89) found among young Palestinian students that the prevalence of PTSD was higher among children who had economic hardship than children who had better financial status.

2.3.2. Protective Factors

Regardless of the dreadful nature of war experiences, children are capable to adapt and do not show depression or aggressive behaviour by (Shaw, 2003, p. 244). Quite a number studies have identified some protective factors that seems to ameliorate (lighten or mitigate) war-related trauma on children's mental health. They can be conceptualized on family, individual and social levels. First on the family level, attachment relationship is essential in understanding how adolescent cope in the face traumatic war experience or adversity. A study of war-affected adolescents in Northern Ugandan exemplified the importance of good family relations in successful reintegration of male former child soldiers and their mental health (N=741) (Annan et al., 2006, p. 15). They revealed that participants who had high family connectedness and social support were more likely to have lower levels of emotional distress and better social functioning.

A similar research by Okello et al., (2014) established the connection between attachment and mental health symptoms and investigated the moderating role of war-related trauma in this relationship among school-going adolescents in Northern Uganda (N=551). Their findings revealed that parental attachment was protective against depression and anxiety symptoms but not posttraumatic stress symptoms. They also arrived at the conclusion that a stable parental connectedness directly correlated with a healthier psychosocial adjustment in adolescents affected by war.

In a follow up study among 86 Palestinian children by Punamäki, El-Sarraj and Quota (2001) found family related resilient factors predicting good psychological adjustment despite the political turmoil. Their findings revealed that children who regard their both parents as highly loving and caring showed significant decrease of PTSD.

Second, education and good academic performance are considered protective individual characteristics. They serve as a secure psychosocial tool that can help ameliorate social and mental health of conflict-affected children. The privilege for an adolescent to continue their education or acquire some vocational training after displacement imbue a feeling of self-identity, optimism and drive that will spur them on for future achievement and accomplishment (Betancourt & Khan, 2008, p. 323). It in turn adds to their dignity while give them a sense of command over their circumstances (Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 368). In their study of war-affected adolescent Palestinians in Gaza, Hundt, Chatty, Thabet and Abuateya (2004, p. 427) revealed that significant number of the participants were putting effort into their academic work or studying hard as an essential coping strategy in dealing with daily stressors.

A research conducted by Kline and Mone (2003, p. 326) among Sierra Leonean refugees in a Liberian camp indicated that optimistic youth who have exhibited strong resilience in coping with their conflict-related experience appreciate educational programs. They recognized, the central importance of a strong belief in education gives to the value and purpose of life. A study by Hasanovic Sinanovic and Pavlovic (2005, p. 109) examined the level of psychological trauma among 239 Bosnian refugee adolescents during exile and repatriation. Their results revealed that continuation of education was directly related to significant reduction in anxiety than being out of school. They further reported that meeting new peers was a safeguard against depressive symptoms, while not being able to communicate with friends, relatives, and neighbours correlated with anxiety. Betancourt and Khan (2008, p. 323) believe that participatory education have the ability to promote strong social networks, social support and interactions between children, teachers and other leaders in the community by coming together in collective force for the welfare and wellbeing of the children.

Punamäki, El-Sarraj and Quota (2001) evaluated the psychological adjustment after post-intifada political violence among Palestinian children. They established that cognitive capacity serve as a resilient function about how well children adjust to traumatic experience. Punamäki, Quota, Miller and El-Sarraj (2011) studied characteristics that would relate resilience Palestinian children (N=640). Results indicate that both the attributes of the individual child, such as good

school performance, good physical health and optimal cognitive functioning, and the family characteristics such as supportive and non-punitive parenting and mentally healthy parents, were associated with resilience in the children.

Third, engaging in prosocial behaviour can act as defence against negative effects of traumatic war experience of adolescents. A survey by Haroz, Murray, Bolton, Betancourt and Bass (2013, p.144) explored the association between prosocial behaviour, perceived social support and improvement in depressive and anxiety symptoms among adolescents who all were exposed to war atrocities in Northern Uganda (N=102). They revealed that greater levels of basic standard of prosocial behaviours were related with improvement in anxiety symptoms among teenagers who exhibited remarkably higher than average improvement.

Finally, on the social level war-affected victims often times turn to religion and seek security in cultural practices especially to cope with their traumatic experience. The religiousness seen to be especially valid coping in Africa. Abundant amount of literature has established a direct correlation between religious commitments as a protective factor when coping with stressful event. A meta-analysis by Ano and Vasconcelles (2005, p. 419) explored the association between religious coping strategies and psychological adjustment for people facing traumatic experience. Their findings revealed that religious coping strategies are strongly correlated with psychological adjustment to stress. Boothby, Crawford and Halperin (2006, p. 96) argue that former Mozambique child soldiers who were reintegrated back into the community saw the community-led traditional cleansing performed for them as a first step towards psychological recovery. Ceremony like that have been found as a transformation of self-image, self-esteem and acceptance by the community members (Boothby et al., 2006, p. 96; Stark, 2006, p. 214). Hundt et al., (2004, p. 427) reported how Palestinian girls in Gaza used prayers at home to cope with traumatic stress. The boys on their part offered prayers in the mosque and sought advice from religious leaders as a coping mechanism to trauma and stress.

2.4. The role of forgiveness in coming to terms with the past

Forgiveness has been found to have positive impact on victims of violence and has been identified as a way of coping with traumatic experience (Chapman, 2007; Worthington, 2006). The victim perceive the wrongdoer with compassionate empathy, benevolence and affection while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the vengeful thought or negative emotions. Enright and the human development study group (1994, p. 64) conceptualized forgiveness as a gift offered by the victim unconditionally without the perpetrator performing any act of contrition or apologizing for their wrongful act committed. Susan Collin Marks who serve as a conciliator during South African transition from Apartheid to democracy emphasized that “forgiveness is not predicated upon the offender’s apology, show of remorse or performing act of contrition but it is the ability of each individual digging deep and drawing his or her humanness to with the other” (cited in Jenkins, 2012, p. 8). Thus, the core idea in forgiveness is that the offended makes the choice regardless of the magnitude of victimization experience or the attitude or behaviour of the perpetrator (Enright, 2001; Enright & the human development study group, 1991; Freedman and Knupp, 2003).

Others disagree with these assertions or definitions of forgiveness. They believe that offenders desire to get acknowledgement or acceptance of responsibility by the perpetrator. If the perpetrator show remorse and genuinely apologizes for the atrocities committed that will aid or facilitate forgiveness (Allan & Allan, 2000; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997; Robbennolt, 2003, p. 486). Allan, Allan, Kaminer and Stein (2006, p. 96) examined the association between apology and forgiveness among victims of human right violation in a sample of 134 men and women (25-86 years) from four communities in Cape Province in South Africa. They found out that the respondents who believed that the offenders was genuinely sincere with their apology at the truth and reconciliation committee were significantly more forgiving.

To encourage forgiveness, it is even more favourable to first establish justice as emphasized by Tripp, Bies, and Aquino (2007). Justice play an important role in the forgiveness process and can be a predictor of the decision to forgive (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). According to Exline,

Worthington, Hill and McCullough, (2003) it is far easier for victims of injustice to forgive or reconcile with their perpetrators who already have been punished for their offenses. While Pankhurst (1999) effort to punish perpetrators of past crimes has the capability to increase the chance to restore peace and security. In the absence of justice it emboldens victims of injustice to seek vengeance which makes forgiveness and reconciliation difficult to achieve.

The process of forgiveness can also be viewed as a means to an end goal that leads to a restoration of a relationship, and the establishment of fair social order (Power, 1994). Lack of reconciliation also means incomplete forgiveness, but Enright and his colleagues distinguished forgiveness from reconciliation in a sense that forgiveness is a choice to be made by the offended, whereas reconciliation is a choice involving both the offended and perpetrator. (Enright & the human development study group, 1991).

2.4.1. Psychological benefits of forgiveness

Previous studies have indicated that forgiveness improves mental health (Toussaint & Webb, 2005) and enhances psychological healing (West, 2001), thereby promoting health resilience. Individuals who are able to forgive are less likely to suffer mental and somatic health problems. A national probability survey of 1423 participants by Toussaint, Williams, Musick and Everson (2001, p. 253) revealed that there is a relationship between forgiving to others and the lower likelihood to be depressed, angry or anxious. They further demonstrated that among middle age and elderly people, forgiveness to others was more strongly connected to good self-reported mental health and optimal physical health than among young adults. In their study of relationship between trauma and forgiveness Doran, Kalayjian, Toussaint and DeMucci (2012, p. 618) had similar findings in post-conflict Sierra Leone. With a sample of 117 older and young participants (ages ranged from 20 to 60 years old) they established that forgiving behaviour and total forgiveness among older participants was significantly higher than younger participants. They further reported that willingness to forgive was more highly associated to low trauma-related stress for older people than for younger participants. Also similar by Toussaint et al., (2001)

found that relationship between low forgiveness and high symptoms were strongest in older people, especially women.

Further empirical research have shown that forgiveness has beneficial impact on stress, subjective and psychological wellbeing and depression (Lawler & Piferi, 2006, p. 1017; Stein, Seedat, Kaminer, Moomal, Herman, Sonnega & Williams, 2008, p. 466). Some empirical evidence suggests that failure to let go of negative emotions may lead to serious health implications. A study by Worthington, (2006) shows that an individual's failure to forgive his perpetrators will worsen his psychological suffering. Krause and Ellison (2003, p. 85) in their nationwide survey of whites and African Americans examined the relationship between forgiveness to others and psychological wellbeing in late life (N=1500). Their results indicated that older individuals who forgave others for the wrongful act committed against them reported significantly fewer depression symptoms than other elderly, who were uncompromisingly unforgiven. Specifically unforgiveness was much strongly correlated with mental health symptoms.

2.4.2. Physical benefits of forgiveness

Empirical evidence shows strong correlation between forgiveness, physical health and even diseases (Witvliet, Ludwig & Vander Lan, 2001; Witvliet, Phipps, Feldman & Beckham, 2004). How individuals of traumatic victimization cope with their experience may be associated with negative health symptoms. Witvliet al (2001, p. 118) suggested that when victims of traumatic experience harbour resentful feelings it means the person is adamant or unwilling to forgive the perpetrator. The non-forgivers then are most likely to suffer detrimental health outcomes associated with negative emotions or feelings. Allan and Scheidt (1996 cited in Witvliet 2001, p. 122) underscored this by stating that resentment, anger and revenge are psychosocial risk factors for cardiovascular disease. For instance, Gallo and Matthews (2003, p. 32) revealed that negative emotions, resentment and anger had negative effects on cardiovascular health. While negative emotions lead to detrimental health consequences, a victim of injustice who forgives their

wrongdoers liberates his or herself from the negative feelings that enhance their physical health and wellbeing.

An experimental study of 71 college students by Witvliet et al., (2001, p.120) aimed to examine the health implications of either to harbour a grudge or to forgive. Respondents were made to recall a wrongful act committed against them and then react to the incident by making a choice to either grant forgiveness or harbour a grudge against the perpetrator. The findings revealed that, as compared to those who were unforgiving, individuals who were more forgiving show a significant decrease in corrugator EMG, skin conductance, and heart rate and blood pressure that are all physiological indicators of high stress. Lawler, Younger, Piferi, Billington, Jobe Edmondson and Jones (2003, p. 382) replicated Witvliet et al., (2001) with a sample of 108 students, using different measures of trait and state forgiveness. Individuals were made to recall during interviewed session about hurtful interpersonal experience (about parent and friend/partner). They established that both trait and state forgiveness help boost the cardiovascular functioning. Lower systolic, diastolic, and mean arterial pressure, pressure product and the rate-pressure product were found to be related to higher state forgiveness and lower state forgiveness for both parent and a friend/partner. They further argue that higher trait forgiveness strongly correlated with diastolic, mean arterial pressure and lower systolic.

2.4.3. Emotional and affective benefits of forgiveness

An individual whose rights are undermined or who has suffered an injustice can perceive the experience as distressing or traumatic. These perceptions are often followed by negative emotions such as anger, hatred, vengeance and hostilities (Berry, Worthington, Parrot, O'Connor and Wade, 2005, p. 185). Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa (1994-1999) anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician and philanthropist was a strong advocate for forgiveness. He once said that having this negative feeling which is associated with unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for your enemy to die. Meaning as long as victims of brutal atrocity stays angry and remains indignant to forgive, they remain chain or bound towards their hurtful past and remain emotionally affected much more than the offender (Enright, 2001). Therefore

the only way to free oneself and to leave above your traumatic and wrongful experience is to forgive.

Studies support the claim that individuals who let go of their grudges by forgiving their offenders reap emotional benefits (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Witvete et al., (2001) investigated the physiological and emotional effect of individuals who were asked to either grant forgiveness or be unforgiving towards their offenders in real life circumstance. They reported that when individuals who have experienced any hurts tend to be more forgiving to their offenders, the physiological demands of unforgiving emotional resentment and hostilities are mitigated.

Tangney (1999) evaluated individual differences in the propensity to forgive their offenders among 285 undergraduates participants. They revealed that individuals who forgave others for the wrongful act committed against them show marked reduction in negative emotions such as anger, aggression and revenge. A research by Berry et al., (2001) examined dispositional forgiveness in a five-item scenario-based among 518 student participants. They find out dispositional forgiveness was inversely related to both hostilities and trait anger. Forgiveness therefore can neutralize negative emotions of victims of injustice looking at the articles reviewed above.

2.4.4. Behavioural benefits

It is within the legitimate right of an individual who has suffered injustice to be resentful and angry towards their perpetrators. On the other hand, they are also expected to be compassionate and empathetic towards them. When an offended person abandons vengeful feeling or ceases to be resentful and angry against his or her perpetrator, it dissipates destructive behaviour and enhances positive behavioural change which leads to genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. It enhances constructive behaviour which is the essence of successful reconciliation. When one grants forgiveness, according to Enright and North (1998, p, 49) he desirably receives the perpetrator into the human community and therefore sees each individual as deserving of respect. Positive

behaviour change may be the offended coexisting peacefully with the perpetrator in the same community or extending helping hand when he or she is in need. Enright (2001) is of the opinion that if the victim of aggression is religious they may endeavour to pray for the wrongdoer.

In their research of the impact of forgiveness on adolescent adjustment to parental divorce Freedman and Knupp (2003, p. 153) explored the influence of an intervention program for adolescents who have experience parental divorce using forgiveness as the purpose. The ten respondents volunteer to either be part of the experimental group or the control group. Pre-test conducted among the participant's revealed negative emotions and reactions associated with hurts and their parent separation. Respondent in the experimental group received intervention of eight weeks education about how to forgive and not revenge. After the forgiveness education all the respondent demonstrated a forgiving behaviour towards their divorced parents. Results also show a remarkable increase of the psychological wellbeing of the experimental group likewise positive behaviour towards their divorce parents.

McCullough, Worthington and Rachal (1997, p. 328) examined interpersonal forgiveness in close relationship among 239 student participants. They revealed that forgiveness was strongly associated with conciliatory behaviour and avoidance of destructive behaviour towards the offending partner. Therefore forgiveness enhances constructive behaviour, which therefore leads to strengthening of weaken relationship.

2.5. Traditional process of forgiveness in African context

Negative stereotypes portray Africa as continent where intractable conflicts persist. While not denying that conflicts do exist in Africa, it is imperative that due attention must also be given to factors that contribute to peace and bring about forgiveness in conflict resolution. It is important to discuss the role religion plays in bringing about forgiveness in conflict resolution in Africa. The presentation of rich variety of reconciliation and peace building across the continent is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead it will focus on the oral traditional beliefs and three selected tribes (Ashanti, Kpelle and Acholi). The case of Ubuntu as applied to the South Africa's

Truth and Reconciliation Commission is then presented, and Christianity as one of the official religions on the continent is reviewed. Religion forms the basis of African cultural practices that provides values, practices and social norms that encourage forgiveness (Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim & Madia, 2001; Tsang, McCullough & Hoyt, 2005). People all over the continent have deeply rooted cultural heritage. Religion permeates through every facets of the lives of the African people. Mbiti in his book entitled *African religions and philosophy*, explain the religious nature of Africans in this manner:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is therefore, ultimately a study of the people themselves in all complexities of their traditional life (106).

Religion therefore serves as way of life and guide to practical living in most communities in Africa (Mbah 2013, p. 36). It is profound and primarily humanistic, based on the human condition (Lugira 2009, p. 107). The welfare of the people in the community and harmony in the society form the core of African traditional religion. Religion plays a central role in conflict resolution in Africa. In a typical African community, where social solidarity is highly valued, all signs of tolerance and cooperativeness are observed and nurtured (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill & Rothchild, 1988, p. 72; Foraker-Thompson, 1990, p. 8). When dispute settlement-directed talks take place in Africa community, forgiveness and the process of reconciliation is advanced to a feasible extent. A typical immediate goal is to reach an agreement that includes more than merely problem solving or rectifying injustice, but also achieving durable peace through forgiveness and genuine reconciliation and, where necessary, restitution and rehabilitation (Assefa, 1993, pp. 9-16; Deng, 1996, p. 6).

Relationships that have been broken or damaged should be repaired, wrongs should be rectified, and justice restored. Basically what is paramount is the restoration of relationship and reconciling the disputed factions so as to build social harmony. Society or group relationships and rights are as imperative as individual ones that is why much emphasis is placed on building

bridges, rectify inequalities and making peace among groups (Choudree, 1999 cited in Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2012). After a conflict, parties should be fully integrated into their communities again. The whole community is responsible for any wrong doings of one of its members. As human beings we are inextricably link together including disputants as perpetrators or victims (Murithi, 2006). Mbiti underscores this by stating “whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the group happens to the individual. The individual can only say, ‘I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.’” In this community spirit lies their security (Mbiti, 1991 cited in lugira 2009, p. 18).

As a people we are knit in the web of togetherness and collective solidarity. Therefore African religion seek not to undermine what binds people together but strive for the communal unity, enhances the human dignity and personhood of all in the community (Tutu, 1999, p. 31). The meaningful way an individual live his life, perform and discharge his duties to the social group (Golwa, 2013, p. 21). These salient characteristics underscores traditional African religion.

2.5.1. Oral traditional belief

Oral traditions are expressed in stories, myths, legend and especially proverbs. Here the research will focus on proverbs that epitomize African traditional belief and norms. According to Kawano (1999, p. 6) proverbs are rich source of cultural information that is drawn from the shared experience of the people. Practical experience of living and wisdom is expressed in insightful way in a number of proverbial African adages. Proverbs serve as a conduit in which desirable code of conduct and acceptable behaviours are communicated across generations in traditional African societies (Kquofi, Amate & Tabi-Agyei, 2013, p. 86; Venter 2004, p. 158). Generally they fulfil an important function in solving practical life problems especially among communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Different societies in Africa have their own concept and process of forgiveness. There are several proverbs that tend to support forgiveness. For instance, an adage in Akan language in Ghana that states that “*tekrema bogya, wofe bi gu na womeni bi*”, meaning not all blood on an

individual tongue can be spat out; some remains on the tongue and the individual swallows it (Opoku 2003, p. 18). This proverb is a metaphoric expression about forgiveness. It admonishes individuals who have been hurt may reprimand the offender (spewing out most of the blood), but the victim in the end must forgive the perpetrator (by swallowing a least amount of the blood).

The underlining principle is that forgiving your offender ends a fight and brings about peace. For instance, the Oromo people of Ethiopia have a proverb that states "*let it be*", *people remain together in peace*", meaning it is only when people leave in peace that is where there will be progress and development (Cotter, 1996, p. 85). The Yoruba people of Nigeria states that "*the one who forgives ends the quarrel*", (Ibekwe, 1998, p. 73). A victim's inability to forgive means there will not be anybody to relate and play with in the near future. Others see "*the one who forgives gains victory*", (Ibekwe, 1998, p. 73). Another school of thought holds that the failure of the offended not to forgive has negative implications on that individual. It makes that person a prisoner of the past who therefore remains bound to the offender. Forgiveness hence is the remedy for self-liberation and breaking away from the chains of hurtful past.

Revenge is believed to be counterproductive according to (Opoku, 2012, p. 228). It is a recipe for self-destruction and creates continuous cycle of retribution which is unhealthy for both the victim and the perpetrator. Although some see it as an avenue of getting even or justice but the Senegambia proverb (Khan & Khan, 2004, p. 21) that state that "*he who kicks a donkey in return is no better than the donkey*", teaches a moral lesson about life. These adage question the action and admonish people that before you embark on a vengeful journey you must be prepared for the detrimental repercussions of your non-forgiveness to yourself. It further emphasizes that in order not to protract conflict one needs to be able to forgive. Revenge is one main source of fuelling conflict. There is value in not avenging the wrongs done you, as to Opoku (2012, p. 288) paying back for another's evil act brings you to the same level as the offender. Forgiveness is therefore consider in an adage as more satisfactory than revenge and elevate the offended morally above the offender to (Auerbach, 2005, p. 477).

Disputes which have a negative repercussions on both the individual and community and has the propensity to undermine social cohesion needs to be avoided as a plague. (Opoku 2012, p. 228,

Tutu, 1999, p. 28). Therefore an individual who act without thought or not taking cognizance of the aftermath of his action could take a cue from this proverbial African maxim that “*to forgive a wrong is the best revenge*”, (Ibekwe, 1998, p. 64). Forgiveness is therefore noble because the victim has let go of his or her justified hatred and resentment towards the perpetrator whiles recognizing the reality of the act committed against him or her and the moral blame of the guilty party.

2.5.2. Ashanti process of conflict resolution and forgiveness

In Ashanti culture a person is regarded as beings who are intrinsically communal by nature, and therefore families are made up of clusters of people not isolated atomic beings (Opoku, 1997). Members in a community are inextricably intertwined in a web of interrelationships and interpersonal ties, resulting in the pursuit of shared values, interest, and goals (Opoku, 1997). These values and norms inform the people of Ashanti what is worth pursuing. There is bound to be conflict and dispute arising from human interface but the satisfactory means of communal harmony lies on the process for resolving these disputes and ironing out the differences. According to Agyekum (2006, p. 360), “*asennie*” is an arbitration or customary resolution of disputes without recourse to destructive tendencies among the Ashantis in Ghana.

The Ashanti process of forgiveness begins with the offender recognizing or accepting that he/she has offended someone. In some cases, the attention of the offender may be drawn to it by his/her family members, spouse, close friends or the offended individual her/himself. Within the same family, if somebody offends the other, the head of the family consults the other elderly people or may invite elders from outside the clan. They constitute a jury to resolve the disputes. The arbiters are dignified people because of their age, wisdom, intelligence and their sense of discipline and therefore, command a great deal of respect in the community. They also abreast with the custom and norms of the traditional group. The jury will then ask the parties to present their sides of the matter, in turns.

Oftentimes, the offender would begin his/her statement by showing remorse and rendering unqualified apology and would ask the arbiters to support him/her do same (Obeng, 1999, p. 714). If the offense is not a serious one, the offended party would accept the apology. In case it is a serious infraction the offender will be ask to compensate the victim with certain items which are determined by the arbiters. The items may be an amount of money, eggs or a fowl or a sheep or a combination of the above.

When disputes involves individuals from different families, the process of forgiveness is almost the same. The offender usually consults respected elderly persons from his/her family or an elder outside the clan. The elders would then go with the offender to the offended party's house to plead for forgiveness. In certain cases, the meeting could be held at a neutral place, usually in a revered elderly person's house. The leader of the delegation, his accompanying elders and the offender renders an apology to the victim and appease him or her with some items. The offended party in some cases could reject or accept some of the compensation package or only accept the verbal apology. An apology may be rejected if it is smacks of insincerity (Obeng, 1999, p. 716). When the apology is rejected, efforts are made by the offender's party to go back to the offended person again but with a much more experienced and respectable delegation to plead for forgiveness. This means that forgiveness may not be obtained at one session. Some cases, therefore, go through two or three sessions.

In other instances, the offended party may lodge complaint at the paramount chief's palace or the queen mother's court. When a case is reported, the chief of the land will assemble his council to adjudicate on the issue. Both parties will be asked to present their case before the traditional council. The council applies persuasive strategies in peaceful arbitration to prevent deep seated acrimonies which undermines social cohesion (Agyekum, 2006, p. 361). After submission is made by the feuding factions, the traditional authorities move into secret chamber to engage in series of consultation to determine who the guilty party is. They then come back to pronounce their judgment and accompanying compensation in line with customs and traditions of the Ashanti people. In the traditional Ashanti setting, the ultimate aim is reconciliation not essentially punishment. Even when a person is adjudge to be guilty admonition is steered

towards reintegration (Agyekum, 2006, p. 365; Uwazie, 2000, p. 18). The verdict of the council is binding and is respected by all parties.

Therefore the offended party will then accept the apology and items. Libation which is essential component of the customary arbitration is poured to thank God, the ancestors and the deities for a peaceful resolution and the rest of the drink is shared among the people. The wrath of the gods will then be visited upon any party that breach the verdict reached (Kouassi, 2000, p. 71). Finally the disputants will be made to shake hands as a symbolic gesture of genuine forgiveness and further swear an oath to peacefully coexist. To achieve unconditional forgiveness and restore broken relationship, there is active participation of the family, clan group, or to a larger extent the community is required and ample opportunity is provided for the family to participate in the whole process of forgiveness. It is a healing process that is why it requires the collective involvement of all with vested interest to make meaningful contributions in line with the spirit of the community.

2.5.3. Kpelle process of conflict resolution and forgiveness.

The Kpelle tribe of Liberia of West Africa convene moots, a local ad hoc meeting chaired by experienced traditional elders to resolve disputes and conflicts among its members (Fry, 2006, p. 28; Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 9). What underlines their traditional dispute resolution process is their belief systems and set of norms. According to Brock-Utne (2001, p. 6) these value system and beliefs is the only viable means in resolving African conflicts today. The process is seen as an effective tool in facilitating forgiveness and restoring harmony within the group. Apologies form the core part of the process in reconciling the disputed parties. The offender will formally apologise to the offended. The apology according to Podolefsky and Brown (1994, p. 3) takes the form of giving of token gifts to the offended by the guilty party. Such items include clothing, a few coins and rice, or a combination of all these items. It is also acceptable traditionally for the victor to donate a small percentage of the received items out as an indication of his acceptance and genuine forgiveness.

The significance of the gesture of giving and accepting gifts stands as an indication of the fact that none of the conflicting parties bears any further grudge against the other in future (Gibbs, 2006, cited in Fry, 2006, p. 28). Finally the disputed factions and the witnesses gathered all share drinks together during the adjudication by the paramount chief to symbolise the restoration of solidarity of the group and the rehabilitation of the guilty party back into the society (Podolefsky & Brown 1994, p. 4). This traditional process of forgiveness in repairing broken relationship among the Kpelle tribe is not only reconciliatory but therapeutic according to (Podolefsky & Brown 1994, p. 5). A healing process for the victim from hurts and wrongs than him or her.

2.5.4. Acholi process of conflict resolution and forgiveness

The Acholi ethnic people of East Africa occupying northern Uganda use similar traditional practice to reconcile conflicting parties. Their method of settling dispute is deeply embedded and influence by their core traditional values and customs. Traditional rulers play an important and pivotal role in settling dispute among members under their leadership. According to Bogoro (2013, p. 53) they serve as a role model for peace initiators for others to promote peace in the community. Acholi traditional leaders of the community acts as arbitrators and reconcilers when dispute occurs in order for the offended to forgive the offender. This is done to restore and embraced peaceful coexistence whiles maintaining a cordial relationship between families and clans in the community. They also seek to restore balance and eliminating disputes among its members (Golwa, 2013, p. 31).

The process involves the offender; admitting responsibility for the wrongful act, repenting, asking for forgiveness, paying compensation as a form of appeasement to the offended and finally reconciling with the victim by sharing a traditional drink ("*Mato Oput*") together. The resolution reached by the traditional leaders is confirmed by performing a ritual aiming at mending broken relationship and reintegration of the offender into the group (Golwa, 2013, p. 33). Whiles symbolic gesture of the offended and offender eat from the same bowl and drinking a traditional wine as a sign of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation (Bakut, 2013, p. 81).

2.6. Ubuntu and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

From 1948 to 1994, South Africa was ruled by a system of racial segregation known as Apartheid. It was designed to oppress and subdue the country's black population in order to maintain white supremacy by the minority white Afrikaners population. The end of Apartheid was marked by two landmark events. Firstly, in 1990 Nelson Mandela-an anti-apartheid activist-was released from prison following 27-years of imprisonment. This was followed by a national election in 1994 which elected Mandela as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. He was also the President of the African National Congress (ANC) party. As part of his government's efforts to dismantle the Apartheid legacy, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu was established in 1995 to investigate gross violations of human rights committed during Apartheid. Given the systematic violence experienced by black South Africans for more than three decades it would seem a daunting task to achieve reconciliation and forgiveness within the two (2) year time frame of the TRC.

South Africa's TRC has been lauded as an international best practice in post-conflict reconciliation (Murithi, 2006). This can partly be attributed to the fact that instead of an exercise in witch-hunting, the TRC was designed to foster forgiveness, promote reconciliation and national healing (Minow, 1998; Murithi, 2006). The TRC was partly based on a way of life known as Ubuntu, a philosophical doctrine which reflect an indigenous African tradition and value system (Makhudu, 1993, p. 40). Murithi emphasized that:

The guiding principle of Ubuntu was based on the notion that parties need to be reconciled in order to re-build and maintain social trust and social cohesion, with a view to preventing a culture of vendetta or retribution from developing and escalating between individuals and families, or in the society as a whole (2006, p. 22)

According to the principles of Ubuntu, a community has a sense of responsibility for any wrong doings of one of its members. When an individual breaks a law, his community will have to take a part of the responsibility for the action of one of the fellow member. The principles are meant

to instil a sense of shared interest in peaceful coexistence, and an understanding of the futility of conflict, as well feeling of safety as community takes ultimate responsibility. No individual is left in isolation because he lives for the community (Kamwangamalu, 2007, p. 27). This spirit of communalism is one core value of Ubuntu, indicating that regardless of a person potentials and unique abilities, he or she cannot succeed in a community alone (Gyekye 1987 cited in Kamwangamalu 2007, p. 28). It is important to recognize one's inadequacy to accomplish his or her wellbeing through a singular endeavour. This adage extol the virtues of communal solidarity and demonstrate how the individual needs his community to thrive. One can only achieve his sense of purpose and destiny if he works in line with the community. The protector of the individual is the community for this reason he must toe the path of the community. According to Venter (2004, p. 151) community and the feeling that you belong to a group is part of the essence of traditional African life which underlines Ubuntu.

Desmond Tutu (1999, p. 28) asserts that Ubuntu speak to the real core of being human because of the notion that a person is a person through other person. This notion of Tutu gives credence to the idea of communal interdependency. Whiles a proverb in Akan which states that "*onipa na oma onipa ye onipa*" meaning it is a human being who makes another person a human being. Opoku (2012, p. 4) also buttress the idea of interdependency as one of the core virtue of Ubuntu. Our humanity is intertwine with one another as well as our survival is dependent on each other. An individual should therefore rely on the support of his neighbour when he or she is in need. Venter (2004, p. 154) points out that people who have the passion of sharing and are empathetic towards others in the group are generally considered good within the African setting. It also ones social responsibilities and duty to help out his fellow individual in a traditional society.

The conduct of individuals within the community or group is essential to Ubuntu. Therefore ones individuality and humanity would have no significance if others fail to recognise or acknowledge that (Elechi, Morris & Schauer, 2010, p. 75). Individuals are expected in the group to treat others with dignity and respect. Ubuntu as a doctrine encourages human relationship and increase human worth, honour and status. Failure to treat others with the humane feeling undermines the spirit of Ubuntu that individual cannot be regarded as human being (Murove, 2013, p. 37). For the development and of growth of the community one must commit to living in harmony and in

peace with his compatriot. As the spirit of Ubuntu thrives in collective support according to (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005, p. 223). Therefore failure of the victims of who experienced gross human rights violations during the apartheid to forgive and reconcile with their perpetrators undermine the concept of Ubuntu on which the South African truth and reconciliation was based.

2.7. Christian Concept of Forgiveness

Both theologians and Psychologist consider forgiveness a worthwhile and efficient process through which an individual overcome traumatic past and restore broken or damage relationship. One pervasive way in which people rely on to grant forgiveness regardless of their hurtful experience is Religion. People's inclination to their religious faith help them facilitate forgiveness. Wade and Kidwell (2010) found out that people who are more devoted to their religious faith are more likely to view themselves as forgiving people. McCullough and Worthington (1999) support this assertion and emphasized that in a large Christian community those who are more devoted and religious appreciate and value forgiveness.

This research will focus on the Christian perspectives on forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of foundational doctrine of Christianity (Rye, Pargament, Ali, Beck, Dorff, Hallisey, Krause & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2001, p. 254; Witvliet, 2001 cited in Tsang et al., 2005, p. 787). In the Christian religion, God and Christ serve as embodiment of forgiveness. The Christian tradition understand the life of Christ and his message as a message of peace and reconciliation (Mbah, 2013, p. 24). Therefore there is the need to have a forgiving heart.

Wade and Kidwell (2010, p. 43) in their qualitative study of understanding forgiveness in the lives of religious people reveal that the most common motivation for the participants especially Christians to forgive their offenders is to follow the model of Christ in forgiving. Forgiving and being compassionate to those who have committed a wrongful act against them will make them Christ-like. Followers of Christ are therefore encouraged and inspired by God to tenderly or willingly forgive even when the person is undeserving (Enright, Gassin & Wu, 1992; Rye et al., 2000, p. 24).

The biblical concept of forgiveness has its foundation in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ whose death according to the bible purged mankind of their sins. Christ forgave his executioners without waiting for them to ask for forgiveness (Auerbach, 2005, p. 479). Being human there is the tendency or likelihood not to forgive a wrongful act committed against you. In many cases the emotional pain is often times unbearable and the only resort to get even is to seek revenge. However as a Christian one is expected unconditionally to forgive, no matter how traumatic the victimization was or how the magnitude of the offence was. Forgiving others as Christ did is principal to the tenets of the Christian faith (Rye et al., 2000, p. 31).

In the parable of unforgiving servant, the master was compassionate and forgives the servant of huge financial debt, but then the servant was unwilling to forgive another person else comparatively a small amount (Matthew 18:27-32). The narratives of Christ's life on the earth serve as metaphors of wisdom and guidance to his followers (so they are like African old stories). Christ gave this story of the unmerciful servant so as to let his followers forgive when they are wronged no matter the gravity. To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you (Lewis, 2001, p. 182). The bible emphasize this in (Ephesians 4:31-32, NKJV) "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Anger, hatred and bitterness has the propensity to harden ones heart in the absence of forgiveness making it difficult as Christian to receive God's love, spirit or freedom. We will not be able to love our neighbour as ourselves as stated in the good book in (Mark 12:31).

Additionally, as a Christian forgiving a person who have committed a wrongful act against you gives the offended the platform to exhibit his or her religious faith in a real life situation. That is to show a behaviour that may have the tendency to enhance ones daily living for instance restoration of good relationship with people. Christianity place much emphasis on individual forgiveness so that one can have happiness in the present life and prospect for future life in heaven (Rye et al., 2000, p. 38).

According to Krause & Ellison (2003, p. 77) relationship with God to a greater extent is dependent on faith and belief, and therefore the benefits of God forgiving mankind of their sinful nature may basically include psychological and affective factors. An individual can have a strong sense of receiving divine forgiveness (Lampton, Oliver, Worthington & Berry, 2005) and that can lead to psychological healing and wellbeing.

A nationwide survey among adults by Krause and Ellison (2003, p. 85) examined the relationship between religion (Christianity), forgiveness and psychological wellbeing. The results revealed that forgiveness by God was associated with fewer depressed symptoms than not trusting in God's forgiveness. They also found that older people who forgave those who wronged them reported having fewer depressive symptoms than those who fail or were unwilling to forgive the wrongs done them. The result also showed that the relationship between forgiving others and psychological wellbeing was stronger than the relationship between forgiveness by God and psychological wellbeing. A study conducted by Toussaint et al., (2001, p. 253) on the association between forgiveness and health affirms this assertion that forgiveness is associated more with psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction than forgiveness by God.

Forgiving the wrong done you according to Papastephanou (2003, p. 513) implies that the notion of forgiveness as an unexpected and unconditional act where repentance is not demanded. Graham (2003, p. 4) is of similar opinion, as he emphasize that forgiveness is an act of grace, and grace, by definition, is unconditional. He further buttress his view point by stating that if forgiveness is conditional then it becomes an act of merit rather than grace. Barnes (2002) argues that God's love is rather unconditional but his forgiveness is conditional as it is predicated upon the confession and repentance of the sinner. There is no absolute forgiveness from God without the desire confession and repentance of the transgressor. The bible emphasis this by stating that God will forgive if we confess (1 John 1:7).

Secondly, forgiveness of people's sinful act is dependent on their forgiveness of those who have offender them. Failure to forgive means that God will also not forgive you your transgression as the bible points it out in (Matthew 6:14-15) "for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father

forgive your trespasses.” God also set a condition and a criteria of forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer in (Matthew 6:12). We therefore have to forgive because we are forgiven by God (Mbah 2013, p. 29).

People are admonish by the Christian faith to unconditionally forgive. Krause and Ingersoll-Dayton (2001) analysed religion and the process of forgiveness in late life. They hypothesized that people are willing to forgive others unconditionally if they believe God has forgiven them for their own transgressions. They further reveal that if people forgive others unconditionally, they will be unwilling to demand that offenders perform any acts of contrition.

Forgiving one his wrong makes one enhance his relationship with his maker following an act of sin (Rye et al., 2000, p. 17). When a person feels that a wrongful act has been perpetuated against him/her or they themselves have subjected another to dehumanization that eventually leads to a breakdown of relationship between people, undermines social harmony and above all separation between self and God. It is therefore essential to forgive as it renews life for us all in our human association and bring us back to God. Peter in (Matthew 18: 21-22) ask Jesus Christ how many times do we have to forgive if one offends you or sin against?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven (NKJV). Christ answer here tells us the forgiveness is not something that one has to count but should be done often and at all times. Puchalski (2002) underlined this by stating that there is no limit to forgive one another because there is no limit to God's forgiveness. A forgive soul is filled with compassion, meekness and empathetic feeling which enable the individual to lead a more fulfilled Christian fellowship with God.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describe methods used in understanding the experience of young adult Liberians as war survivals, the role forgiveness plays in that experience and their views of future. They lived in Buduburam camp in Ghana and they had fled their home country due to fourteen years long civil war that ravaged Liberia. Qualitative research method was employed by the researcher. Tools applied included; convenient sampling, snowball sampling and semi structured interview. Justification for selecting different methods, approaches and tools have been discussed in detail to indicate reasons for selection. Ethical considerations is also included in this chapter.

3.2. Site for the study

The Buduburam Camp located in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region of Ghana was set up by the government of Ghana and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1990. It was opened for Liberians then escaping the brutalities and persecution from first Liberian civil war (1989-1996) and the second Liberian civil unrest (1999-2003) to provide temporary shelter for them (UNHCR, 2006). The land which was under the traditional authority of Gomoah-Fetteh was duly acquired by the government of Ghana purposely for the occupancy of the Liberian refugees (Gyau, 2008 cited in Tanle, 2013, p. 870). Therefore to Agblorti (2011 cited in Tanle, 2013, p. 871) both the host community and the refugees cannot claim ownership of the land. As there have been clashes between the host community being the indigenes and the refugees for building houses or livelihood activities. Further deepened the tension between the indigenes, some Liberians refugees have took to the sale and loaning of plots of lands to the aversion of the indigenes. Although there is seemingly tension the structure of the camp allows free movement between the Liberian refugee community and the Ghanaian community (UNHCR, 2006).

A Ghanaian who serve as camp manager assisted by the Liberia Refugee Welfare council is in charge of the day to day administration of the camp which is divided into twelve zones. Between the twelve (12) zones, the physical settlement property is divided into nine (9) zones and the other three (3) zones are outside the property and within the local peoples of Buduburam (N'Tow, 2004). The Liberian Welfare Refugee Council serves as a mediating arm between the refugees and the government of Ghana through the Camp Manager (Bortu, 2009, p. 18). The job of the Camp Manager is to secure the interest of the Ghanaian government whiles the council is to ensure they are executed with the paramount wellbeing of the refugees adhered to (N'Tow, 2004). The administration of the camp is largely supported in different ways by diverse organization some based in the camp and external including UNHCR, churches, international and local non-governmental agencies.

While in 2002, there were over thirty thousand (30,000) refugees at Buduburam, the camp is now home to about five thousand (5,000) Liberians. Tens of thousands of refugees have been repatriated to Liberia since October 2004 according to the camp manager Mr Yorke. To Maxwell (1996 cited in Bortu, 2009, p. 18) every qualitative research studies must have a research setting or source where field work can take place. Therefore, Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana was selected for the research because it has the highest number of Liberians living on its premises as refugees including the young adults, who are the focus of my research.

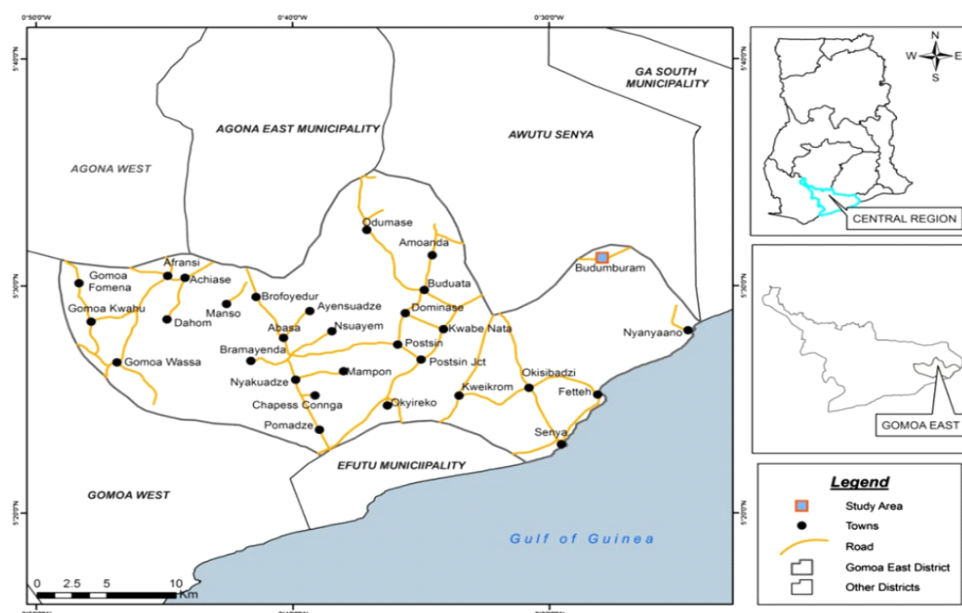


Figure 1 Map of the Gomoa District showing the Buduburam Refugee Camp. Source GIS Unit, DGRP, University of Cape Coast (Culled from Tanle, 2013).

3.3. Formulating a research question

The researcher's main aim of undertaking this field research was to conduct a semi structured interview with young adults Liberians living at the Buduburam camp. The study aims to understand their experience of war as victims or survivors, the role forgiveness has played in this experience, and their future prospects. Basically, it was important to collect a rich data relevant to the research problem and to present a comprehensive account of adolescent's experiences of war. The interviewees were Liberians who were adolescent during the civil war, and were now young adults and lived as refugees. According to Cope (2003, p. 8) the aim of phenomenological study is to understand the subjective nature of 'lived experience' from the viewpoint of those who experience it, by evaluating the subjective meanings and explanations that persons attribute to their experiences. In order to understand the participants experience as victims or survivors of war these research question was formulate to serve as a guide for the study. "What is like to live as an adolescent in war?" Using an in depth interview guide, thirteen (13) refugees of both sexes were interviewed through convenient sampling and snowballing procedure, after obtaining their consent and willingness to participate in the study. Participants' accounts of their experiences as survivors of war were the primary source of data (Dearnley, 2005, p. 21).

3.4. Methodological considerations and the research process

3.4.1. Philosophical orientation of the research

Moustakas, (1994) considers phenomenology as a philosophy which concerns the phenomenon of human experience. As Sokolowski, (2000, p. 57) writes, the phenomenological statements, focus on the obvious and the necessary. The phenomenological phenomena tell us what we already know but the information is given in insightful and succinct form. Sokolowski, (2000) emphasizes that they are not new information, but even if not new, they can still be essential and enlightening, because we often are very confounded about just such trivialities and necessities.

The philosophical foundation of this present study is grounded in Kant (cited e.g., Niiniluoto, 2002), who suggests that the perception of knowledge is transmitted by the conceptual structure of the human mind. In this case, knowledge has no stability in people's perception or cognition since the eventual reality flows through their consciousness, and the phenomenological phenomena include both cognition and experience. The study follows the phenomenological-hermeneutical orientation which highlighted the importance of people in knowledge construction and interpretation. In this case, people's perception of reality is in constant move.

Starks and Trinidad (2007, p. 1374) affirms that in phenomenology reality is understood through embodied experience. Through thorough assessment of individual experiences, phenomenological researchers seek to understand the meaning and real characteristics, and essences of people's experiences or others phenomena. Gaining insight of the phenomenon, as a conceptual entity, is subjective and comprehensible only through embodied perception; meaning is therefore created through the experience of moving through space and across time (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

3.4.2 . Qualitative research methodology, philosophical orientations and research procedure

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 18) conceptualize methodology as a "thorough structured and systematic manner to obtain, generate, clarify and advance knowledge (epistemology) and understanding of a specific unsaturated problem (the ontology)". Accordingly in this study, methodology is a precise way that the researcher uses to scrutinize "the set of questions (epistemology) that are specified by a framework of the set of ideas (theory, ontology) of the way the researcher approaches and perceives the world. The researcher collects empirical data bearing on the question and then analyses them and writes about them', presenting his/her methodology to others".

This process served as a guideline in this present study since the researcher wanted to understand the war experiences of adolescents as they perceive them and construct their meaning. This

choice also reflects the researcher's interest in obtaining the richness of the participants' experiences, their inner world that includes feelings and their understanding of these feelings at a given time and context (Langdridge, 2007). In qualitative research the aim is to gather relevant information that gives a detailed understanding of human behaviour and the reasons for it. This was why in-depth interview as research method was used in this study.

3.4.3 . Main approaches of this study

Table one (1) presents the main approaches, chosen to the present study.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Main approaches of the study Paradigm | Phenomenological |
| Methodology | Qualitative |
| Method | In-depth Interview |
| Analysis | Interpretive |
| Evaluation | Triangulation, self-assessment |

Table 1: Main approaches of the study

Qualitative approach is a general way of thinking about conducting qualitative research. It describes, whether explicitly or implicitly, the goal of the qualitative research, the role of the researcher, the stages of the research, and the method of data analysis (Silverstein, Auerbach & Levant, 2006). This is particularly well suited for this study where understanding the subjective experiences of the participants' past war experience and future views were core aims.

First, it used words rather than numbers to describe their war experiences. Open-ended interviews were used to gather data. The focus was on stories, memories, feelings and behaviour because they allow an access to participants own words. This approach provided a rich description of subjective experience (Silverstein et al. 2006).

Secondly, the method and data collected in qualitative research methodology are in constant interaction and theoretical considerations are constantly renegotiated. In phenomenology, reality

is understood through embodied experience (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). By exploring participants experiences, the meaning or the 'essence' of their experiences can be captured (Van Manen, 1990). However, since culture influences the expression of emotions and constructs, there needs to be a recognition of time and contextual nature of the realities that the interviewed present.

According to Cope, (2003, p. 10) phenomenological research is thus firmly located in a particular context at a particular time. Since the process of understanding experience involves a thematic description of the pre-given essences and structures of lived experiences, some element of interpretation could not be avoided (Langdrige, 2008, p. 1132). In this way of interaction between the researcher and his participants, and the essence of their experience, theoretical considerations are constantly renegotiated. According to Anderson (1987, p. 384), the philosophical grounding is an inductive process moving from particular experiences to more general understanding of human phenomena.

One of the reasons of choosing qualitative approach was that qualitative inquiry reflects the complexity of psychological phenomena (Langdrige, 2007). The recursive method of data analysis that is alternating between inductive and deductive interpretation, illuminates multiple variations and the associations between them.

Third, the qualitative researcher asks the participants for feedback on his or her interpretation of the data, in a manner congruent to a therapist checking to confirm the accuracy of his or her understanding of the client's internal experience (Silverstein et al. 2006). The qualitative paradigm requires that the researcher is self-reflective, that is, he or she examines his or her biases and monitors the dynamic interaction between the researcher and participants, much as the psychoanalytically oriented therapist attends to transference and counter transference. These were the main considerations taken into account before the choice of qualitative approach was made. This was set out to address the aim of this study, which was understanding the very challenging war experiences by exploring the lived experiences of yours adults in African context.

3.4.4. Phenomenology

In the present study, the phenomenological approach gave the opportunity to identify and interpret the most significant moments of the participants' experiences in war, persecution and refugee. The recognition and interpretation of those moments contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. The study employed phenomenology as an empirical method for the following reason.

First, in accord with hermeneutic inquiry, phenomenology recognizes that the social worlds of individuals are shaped by social processes and cultural and linguistic practices, but asserts that these worlds cannot be reduced to them (Smith, 1996). Second, it investigates the life-world of the individual, a concept that is fundamental to existential phenomenology, concerned with both the qualities and characteristics of the individual life, as well as its universal features of subjective embodiment, inter-subjectivity, temporality, spatiality and personal project.

Third, phenomenology recognizes that it is not likely to access an individual's life-world directly because there is no clear and unmediated window into other's life. The access is dependent on the researcher's own conceptions which are required to make sense of the other's personal world through a process of interpretative activity. Analysing the participants experiences and given meaning to them, requires interpretative activity on the part of the researcher. Smith and Osborne (2007, p. 51) describe it as dual process where “the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of their world”. By so doing deeper understanding or insights into their human nature is possible to gain (Maggs-Rapport, 2001, p. 221).

Consistent with its theoretical commitment, phenomenology employs qualitative methodology (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013, p. 2). This is why the researcher employed a qualitative data collection technique to obtain the participants experience as victims of war. Most phenomenology research has been conducted using semi-structured interviews. This enabled the participants to give a more complete, and richer account than would be possible with a standard quantitative instrument. It also enabled the researcher considerable flexibility to explore interesting areas of their experiences. Interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim and then

subjected to detailed qualitative analysis, attempting to bring out key themes in the participant's statements.

3.5. Data Collection Method

Qualitative researchers strive to generate a holistic overall inquiry into a phenomena according to Noy (2008, p. 334). This informed the researcher to collect data with the aim of exploring the lived experience of Liberian war victims from the Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana. In gathering information for this study semi-structured interviews, field observation, field notes, were the foremost data collection methods.

3.5.1 The role of the gatekeeper

Neuman (2000, p. 352) defines a gatekeeper as “someone with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site”. Clarks (2011, p. 487) similarly explains by stating that gatekeepers serve as intermediaries between researchers and participants. Often times according to Clarks (2011, p. 487) they have control of physical access to research participants. Therefore the researcher needs to get their permission or seek their authorization to enable him or her undertaken their studies. A good rapport established between the researcher and the gatekeeper will enable him or her to provide adequate information for contacts to be made. Gatekeepers however, are not experts according to Clarks (2011, p. 487) but people who provide support as an efficient conduit to the site and sometimes to participants. In this regard, the role of a gatekeeper was very crucial to the studies especially as participants are less reluctant in sharing their experience that evoke painful memories with strangers.

The researcher's first point of call from Finland to Ghana was the Ghana refugee board (GRB), which is responsible for the management of activities and general wellbeing of refugees in Ghana. In line with ethical principles, the researcher sent an introductory letter introducing him researcher as a student and stating his mission to undertake a field research at the refugee's camp to the GRB. The permission to conduct the interview was subsequently granted to the researcher

by the Programme Coordinator to the chairman of the board (GRB) who was very helpful during the researcher's interactions with him in Ghana.

Gaining official permission from the Ghana refugee board does not guarantee that Liberian refugees in Buduburam camp will be willing to grant the researcher audience. The researcher was however hopeful with the assurance from the programme's coordinator that the manager at the camp will help. However the situation upon reaching the camp was different as the manager at the camp failed to assist the researcher to get the participants stating that he is busy with official duties. Yet he introduced the researcher to a Liberian teacher at the camp who demanded money to organize the number of participants who will inform my studies. His reason being that many researchers come to the camp to conduct their studies, collect their stories under the pretence that their views will be heard by international agencies and humanitarian organization and their conditions will change but still their plight remains the same. For this reason he told the researcher that refugees at the camp have resolved to collect money from researchers before they will share their stories and I was not going to be an exception.

Fortunately for the researcher, UNHCR was organizing a program for the refugees who had opted for local integration¹. The researcher approached one of the leaders who was acting as an intermediary between the refugees and UNHCR officials who after listening to the researcher's mission to the camp decided to assist. After walking a few metres from the entrance into the camp, the researcher and the opinion leader met madam Fatu, the proprietress of the Women Empowerment Vocational Centre². The opinion leader explained my mission to the refugee

¹ On June 30, 2012, Liberian refugees were stripped of the protection of their refugee status by UNHCR. The international community now has faith that Liberia has been stabilized after having been through two successive democratic elections. For this reason, the eleven thousand and fifty Liberian refugees resident at the camp were offered the option of voluntary repatriation or local integration. Four thousand one hundred and ten (4110) opted for voluntary repatriation and they were all sent home by UNHCR on December 2012. While three thousand eight hundred (3800) opted for local integration and they are currently going through the process for integration, two thousand one hundred (2100) refused these two options and applied for exemptions with their reasons being that they cannot go home and cannot also stay in Ghana. They have instead opted for resettlement in America, Australia or somewhere in Europe. Surprisingly, out of these numbers only two hundred and thirty one (231) were granted that exemption and are waiting for their resettlement package (Interview with Mr. Yorke, the Manager at the Buduburam refugee camp, Ghana)

² Women Empowerment Vocational Centre is a vocational school at the Buduburam camp under the sponsorship of government of Japan to help reduce poverty and to empower fellow refugees with employable skills for better Liberia. They train people in beauty care, dressmaking, and baking. They offer guidance and counselling for their students. Their classes start between 9am-14:00.

camp to Madam Fatu who took the researcher to her school and in turn introduced the researcher to the students in her school. After the brief introduction, the researcher was given the chance to explain his mission to the people. After, encouraging the people to cooperate with the researcher, Madam Fatu offered her office to be used as a place for the interviews. Some of the respondents however rejected this choice of setting for the interview and instead decided where they thought they will be comfortable.

She provided the efficient and expedient routes to the female participants the researcher interviewed which would otherwise have proven difficult to access relative to the limited time the researcher had. To the extent that Madam Fatu assisted the researcher throughout his stay on the field thereby granting him access to her school, where he got all the female respondents the researcher interviewed. The researcher can argue based on what Neuman (2000) and Clarks (2011) posited above that Madam Fatu's role could best be describe as a gatekeeper.

3.5.2. Sampling

Phenomenologists are interested in common features of the lived experiences of participants (Stacks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). They believe that varied samples might provide a broader range from which to extract the meaning of the phenomenon. According to Stacks and Trinidad (2007, p. 1375) data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and who can provide a detailed account of their experience might suffice to uncover its core elements. Based on this argument, thirteen (13) individuals with common experience were carefully selected for this study. As Hycner (1999, p. 156) explained, in phenomenological studies the phenomenon under investigation dictates the method including the type of participants. Convenient sampling with regards to the female participants was employed which is considered by Teddlie and Yu (2007, p. 78) as drawing participants that are both accessible and willing to participate in the study. Based on this argument that the researcher employ convenient sampling, as participants that expressed their willingness to share detail account of their experience as victims of war were interviewed (Mabry, 2008, p. 223).

Participants of this study were chosen based on common experience, with the main aim of generating detailed patterns or themes and relationship of meanings of their experience as war survivors. They were made up of young adult's war survivors of Liberian who live as refugees in the Buduburam camp in the central region of Ghana. There was equal number of men and women to bridge the gender gap and to learn if gender has any influence on war experience and forgiveness. Participants were chosen with two main consideration as my guide; appropriateness as those who were able to inform the study and adequacy as those who were able to offer enough information with regards to their experience (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Dadidson, 2002, p. 726). This was to help the researcher answer the research question, to gain understanding and fully describe the phenomenon under investigation. Also this helped the researcher to achieve some degree of depth, flexibility; richness and validity. Characteristics such as gender, age, cultural background can have an impact on data collected (Mays & Pope, 1996). Therefore it was imperative for the researcher to consider that too.

Snowballing was employed with regards to the male participants. After the researcher interviewed the administrator of the school he suggested other friends he knows for selection (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 726; Silverman, 2005). According to Fossey et al., (2002, p. 726) snowball sampling is when participants identify others with direct knowledge relevant to the research being conducted. This process of getting data is by necessity (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 726). To the researcher snowball sampling was a safety net and a fall back alternative because it was becoming difficult getting the males participant to contribute to his study when all other means of getting male participants was proving futile and with the limited time the researcher had to undertake the field study snowball sampling needed to be employ. The researcher had to direct his informant as to the people and number of male participant the researcher required and he later decided who and how many of the potential participants will be contacted and who can contribute or inform my study. Rapport was established between the researcher and his informant which involves trust and respect because without it the chance of supplying referrals will decrease (Noy, 2008, p. 334).

Some of the male respondents the researcher approach before he was introduced to his informant Mr. Jackson by Madam Fatu were simply very reluctant to participate. They stated emphatically

they did not want to recollect those painful memories because they just want to forget about it all. Some participants were willing to share their stories if the researcher was willing to pay them in monetary terms of which the researcher politely decline. This was not a new phenomenon, similar demands have been made by some of the refugees to previous researchers who went to collect data in the camp and have been stated in their research (see, Tanle, 2013, p. 872)

3.5.3. Semi structured interview

Qualitative research frequently relies on interviewing as the primary data collection strategy. According to (Polit & Hungler, 1991 cited in Appleton 1995, p. 994) interview as a method of data collection in which one person, an interviewer asks questions of another person, a respondent. Interviews are conducted face to face or by telephone. In this study a semi structured interview was utilized to facilitate the exploration of the young adults Liberians experiences as war victims and the role forgiveness plays in that experience. This allows for flexibility for the researcher to grasp or understand more fully the participant and informs overall study objective (Moustakas, 1994). The objective of the interviewer in phenomenological studies is to encourage the participant to elucidate their experience, providing as much concrete detail experience as possible (Langdrige, 2008, p. 1129). To Cope (2003, p. 17) phenomenological interviews enables participants to speak their mind and explore their experiences in their own way.

Having known the advantages and disadvantages of using this source of data collection the researcher proceeded with the interview. After the researcher having explained the aims of the study to the participants, and obtaining their oral consent, the interview begins with a short background chat, aimed at making the participants feel less tensed and comfortable to share their experience as war survivors. Interview guides containing a list of open ended questions and prompts were designed by the researcher to serve as guide to engage the participants (Mabry, 2008, p. 223; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990, p. 9).

The formulation of the interviewed questions was based on the literature reviewed on adolescence experience of war and the role of forgiveness. Since this study is being conducted to

understand the participants' experience of war and explore the role forgiveness play in these experience, question was thus formulated reflecting this. The interviewed proceeded after each participant signalled 'yes' to the question. Interviews was conducted on individual basis in a variety of settings. The interviews of the female participant were conducted in three different places including the proprietress of the vocational schools office, their classroom and under a tree at the compound of the school. This was done to make the participants feel comfortable to narrate their experience as the role of the interviewer is to provide a context in which participants feel free to describe their experiences in detail (Cope, 2003, p. 15). Apart from my informant who was interviewed in one of the classroom at the school all the other male participants were interviewed in their homes.

During the interview the researcher presented himself as a listener and asked the participants to narrate their experience of for example, war, childhood, refugee, family and future. Participants were encouraged to narrate their war experience through open ended questions (Dearnley, 2005, p. 22). Probing question was further ask from their own response and the schedule during the interview to encourage the participants to elaborate on the details of their lived experience. This was aimed to encourage depth and vitality and to allow new concepts to emerge (Dearnley, 2005, p. 22). Above all to generate rich data for phenomenological analysis (Langdrige, 2008, p. 1129).

Few of the participants misinterpreted the open ended questions the researcher posed to them of which the interviewer have to rephrase to make it clearer to them. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. To the researcher if there was any hesitations or reluctance from the participants recounting those painful memories of war, these were covert and were suppressed on the lively flow and informal interactions. Some of the female participant were very emotional and one in the middle of the interview decline to continue stating clearly she cannot recount those painful memories again.

Interview was recorded and have been transcribed, lines have been numbered and key areas of significance has been highlighted to make for easier references. This process include notes the researcher made from the field of the "intensity and feeling in the participants voice" so that "it

is possible to detect positive/negative range or varieties, certainty/uncertainty and enthusiasm/reluctance” (Hancock, 1998). These are good indications of how feelings and meanings are communicated.

3.5.4. Observation as data collection method

Researchers can gather data about how participants behave in their natural settings and make meaning out of their experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2010, p. 1375). To them, in phenomenology observation of how participants live in their environment through time and space gives indications about how they might embody meaning. Patton (2002) asserts that observational data has the ability to describe the activities that are unfolding at the research setting, the people that are participating in those activities and what they are saying as compared to what they are saying during an interview. In this present study, the researcher employed observation as one of the method of collecting data to find out things that are happening in the lives of these participants that they find it difficult to divulge or talk about them (Bortu, 2012, p. 63). Observation field notes were made to add to the data collected by in-depth interview of the participants.

Being a student researcher and a Ghanaian which was known by all the participants respondents, afforded me the opportunity to participate in few of their activities. Playing cards with them, watching the males play basketball and the ladies undertaking their vocational practical's in their school while at the same time maintaining my role as an observer. Engaging the participants in a friendly discussion after the interviews and going to their homes I observed that:

- Most of them struggle to fend for themselves and their children.
- Some have find strength in their distress as they have chosen not to audit their lives but make the most of the bad situation as they believe what does not kill you makes you stronger.

3.6. Data Analysis

In phenomenological studies, data analysis attends to unique themes of meaning within the data, as well as common themes of meaning across data (Tesch, 1990). The major findings in this study will be discussed and analysed based on Moustakas (1994) and Hycner (1999) ideas of (a) essence of experience and (b) explicitation with various steps. These include identifying significant statements, centre premises and a narrative of the “essence of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). The “essence is illustrated as “what” people experienced, as well as “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

The analysis process will also include “explicitation” process, thus searching for components of the experience being studied, as well as maintaining the background of the whole (Hycner, 1994). This process involves five steps. First, bracketing that means peeling away symbolic meanings of adolescent’s stories and phenomenological reductions which is considerations of what is ‘pure’ from their perspective or standpoint. To Moustakas (1994, p. 90) in bracketing the researcher does not allow his or her presuppositions, biases and interpretation or theoretical concept to enter the unique world of the participants. The analytical aim is to attend to the participant narration of the lived experience with complete openness.

Second step is to delineate units of meaning by identifying interesting statements. According to Moustakas (1994) in doing this the list of units that is relevant to the phenomena under investigation must be highlighted from each participant. The aim is to scrutinize the essence of message, and clearly eliminate the inessential units.

Third step is to group units bearing significant meanings in order to outline themes. Groenewald (2004, p. 19) posited that with the list of non-redundant units of meaning in hand the researcher must again suspend his or her personal views and assumptions in order to remain true to the phenomenon or data. The researcher suspend or leaves out his or her presuppositions and biases in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgments and misinterpretation of the participants experience or narration but can use his or her intuitions according to (Groenewald, 2004, p. 19).

Summarizing each interview, confirming it, and if needed transforming it. At this point the researcher conducts a 'validity check' by returning to the participant to determine if the narration of their lived experience has been correctly 'captured' (Hycner, 1999, p. 154). The process will be completed by extracting common and unique themes from all the interviews. That is common themes that cut across the participants interviews were noted and grouped together indicating a general theme that emerge from the data. Whiles variations or unique themes that also emerge from the phenomenon under study and according to Hycer (1985) act as contrast to the general themes were noted. All this was done to reflect the explication process (Hycner, 1999).

3.6.1. Approaches to data analysis

Triangulation was used by the researcher as it increases credibility and validity of the study. Validity is an essential component in evaluating and assessing qualitative research and in judging the authenticity of the study (Bortu, 2007, p. 69; Majoh & Onwugbuzie, 2013, p. 1). To ensure validity the researcher's personal assumptions, beliefs and biases was left out from the participants' narration of their experience of war in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgment ((Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127; Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). Thus, to prevent the researcher's perspective and pre-existing thoughts bracketing is important (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1376). As Moustakas (1994, p. 90) puts it, not to enter into the unique world of the participants.

In this study, bracketing was ensured the researcher present an objective and faithful handling of the data collected (Kruger, 1979 cited in Mohamed-Patel 2002, p. 45). To (Ahern 1999 cited in Chan, Yuen-ling & Wai-tong, 2013, p. 2) bracketing is a means of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and analysis process. This is done with the sole aim of remaining neutral, presenting the issues as it is and not the researcher mixing his personal biases with participant's experience of the phenomenon under investigation. During transcription of the audio recordings of interviews the researcher bracketed himself to remain truthful to the participant's narration of their experience of war (Groenwald, 2004, p. 22)

Transcription of the individual interviews have been sent by emails to few male participants that the researcher collected their details, during his field work for them to determine if the essence of the interview has been correctly 'captured' (Hycner, 1999, p. 154; Moustakas, 1994) and the data collected has not been misinterpreted by the researcher (Chan et al. 2013, p. 5). According to (McNiff, 1988 cited in Dearnley, 2005, p. 23) suggests that to return transcripts to participants is sound research practice. This was done to increase validity as participant can confirm if it reflect their narration of their experience but still have not receive any reply from them. To remedy this situation the salient points that were taking down as notes in the course of interviewing the participants during my field work were read to them by the researcher whether it correspond to what they have said and they all nodded in validation to it.

According to Sandelowski, (1986 cited in Appleton, 1995, p. 995) qualitative study is thus deemed credible if it reveals accurate descriptions of individuals' experiences and 'that the people having that experience would immediately recognize it from those descriptions as their own. In all this, I agree with Mohamed-Patel, 2002, p. 48) argument that the terms of validity and reliability do not fit the requirement and philosophy of qualitative research and in phenomenology particularly as there is no right or wrong in data analysis.

3.7. Ethical issues

This study seek to understand the experience of war of young adults Liberians living at the Buduburam camp as victims or survivors, and the role forgiveness has played in this experience. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI) of University of Tampere, my thesis supervisor and Ghana Refugee Board. These letters introduced the researcher as a student and at the same time seeking consent (compliance) from potential participants for them to grant me audience in the collection of data. Thirteen participants were interviewed and all consented or gave a verbal agreement to partake in the research. Consent has been described as a negotiation of trust, and it requires continuous renegotiation (Field & Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Munhall, 1988 cited in Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001, p. 95).

According to (Williamson 2007 cited in Aluwihare-Samaranayake 2012, p. 69) posited that researchers must ensure participants are fully aware of what they are getting into so that they can give an informed consent prior to participating in any study. Participants were therefore duly informed about the nature of the study therefore there was no act of dishonesty nor deception on the part of the researcher and for them also not to feel penalized to withdraw from the study (Aurelius 2011, p. 56). The participants had the right to freely decide whether to participate in the study, and the right to withdraw. The researcher knew beforehand that, asking people to narrate their experience as victims of war could trigger emotional distress or the person experiencing the phenomenon again. A female participant walk out in the middle of the interview stating that she cannot recollect those painful experience again. It was her right and the researcher did not insist to continue with the interview after stating her reason.

The researcher, was also confronted with an ethical dilemma as most female participants were very emotional during the interview whether to proceed or to stop. In all cases during the interview the researcher had to pause for them to gain composure and ask them if they can continue. The participants signalling “YES” means that they can proceed because the researcher felt the benefits of gaining insight in their traumatic experience or data obtained from their pains does not outweighs the distressful condition of the participant (Orb et al., 2001, p. 94).

The digital recordings of the participants interviewed were transcribed, and lines numbered to make for easier references by the researcher as all participants verbally agreed to be taped recorded. Confidentiality of participants were assured as they were informed that any reproductions of the transcripts in papers or presentations their names would be change to protect their identity but few verbally agreed that I can used their original names.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter gave a detail account of the methodology used in the study. Qualitative study design using convenient sampling and snowball sampling and semi structured interviews were

considered appropriate to generate relevant data. A description of the site where the field work was undertaken and the reason for it being selected was provided. Further, data collection and analyses were introduced. Finally, the researcher adhered to ethical issues of getting approval for conducting the research and getting consent among participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four presents the research findings from the study, based on interviews conducted on adolescents' war experiences. The core is the data and themes that emerged from the participants' narration of their experience. To retain the validity of the reported material and transmit the voices of participants, direct quotes from the interviews will be presented to illustrate the subthemes. The findings of the research revealed adolescents experiences about childhood in war, what they dreamed to be as adults and how the war has affected their childhood and present life. The participants also narrated their war experience and the impact of it on their functional wellbeing and development. They evaluated the significant life events in their lives and their future prospect. Finally the role forgiveness plays in the lives of the participants as war victims and survivors will be presented.

4.2. Distribution of age and gender of respondents interviewed

The distribution of Table two (2) indicates that out of the thirteen (N=13) respondents interviewed, ten (N=10) respondents are between the ages of twenty-five and thirty representing 76.9%. The remaining three (N=3) of the respondents are between the ages of thirty-one and thirty-five representing 23.1%. The above information can also be represented pictorially in Figure two (2)

| Age category (years) | Number of respondents | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 25-30 | 10 | 76.9 |
| 31-35 | 3 | 23.1 |
| Total | 13 | 100 |

Table 2: The age categories of the participants' interviewed

The distribution of Table two (2) shows that out of the thirteen (N=13) respondents interviewed, six (N=6) respondents, representing 46.2%, were males. The remaining seven (N=7) of the respondents representing 53.8% being females. The above information can also be represented pictorially in the figure two (2).

| Gender of respondents interviewed | Number of respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Males | 6 | 46.2 |
| Females | 7 | 53.8 |
| Total | 13 | 100 |

Table 3: The gender of the participant's.

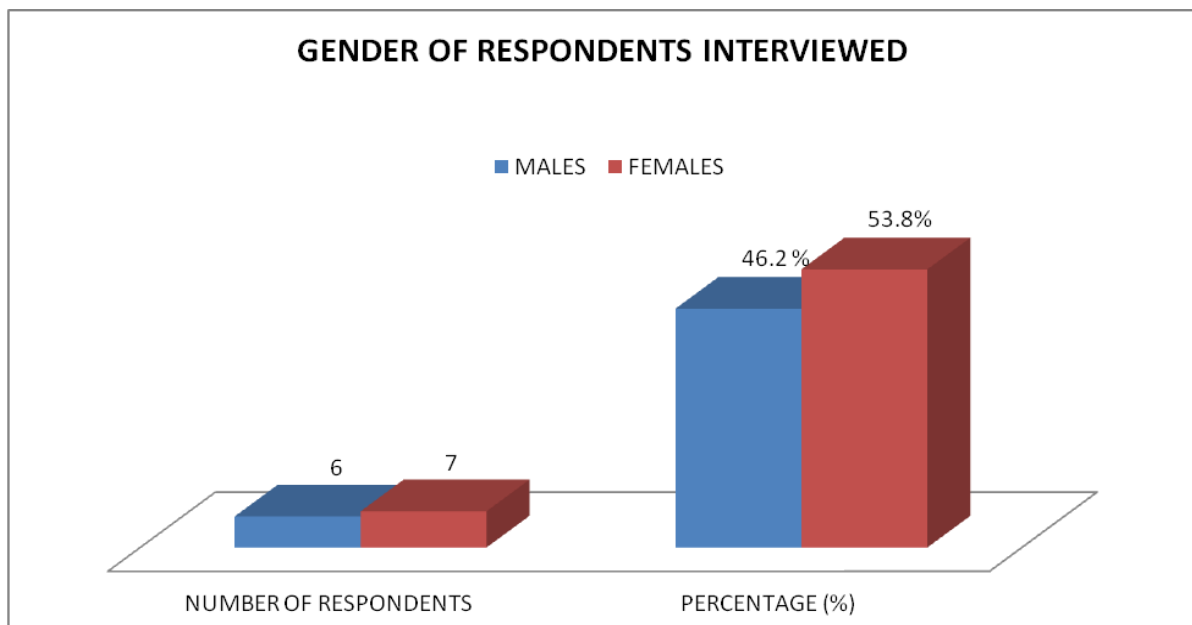


Figure 2: Graphic representation of gender of respondent's interviewed.

4.2.1. Distribution of educational background of respondents interviewed

The distribution of table three indicates that out of the thirteen (N=13) respondents interviewed, five (N=5) representing 38.4% of the respondents are high school dropouts, four (N=4) respondents representing 30.8% have high school certification. With the others, three (N=3) representing 23.1% of the respondents have attained bachelor's degree certification and one (N=1) respondent representing 7.7% have a master's degree. This information is represented graphically in the figure three (3).

| Educational background | Number of respondents | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Master's degree | 1 | 7.7 |
| Bachelor of arts degree | 3 | 23.1 |
| High school certificate | 4 | 30.8 |
| High school dropout | 5 | 38.4 |
| Total | 13 | 100 |

Table 4: The educational background of respondents

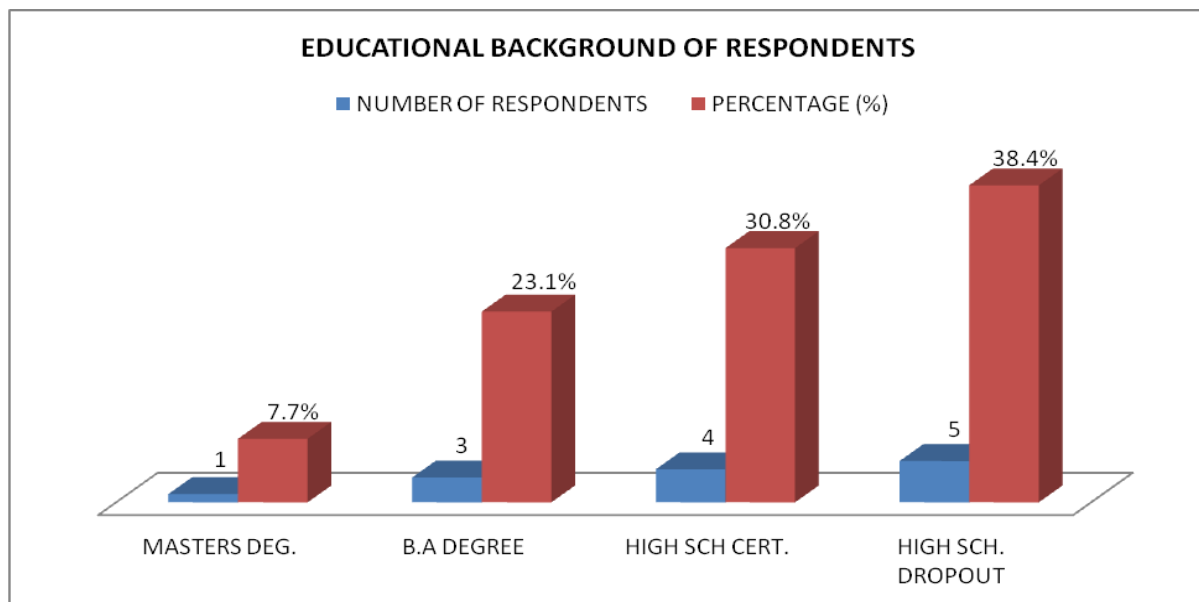


Figure 3: Pictorial representation of educational background of respondent.

4.3. Experiences through childhood memories

Everyone has childhood memories in their life and they are special for everyone whether pleasant or unpleasant. Here participants were asked to give detail account of memories of their childhood. This was used to establish the relationship between their current livelihood and the one before the war. Themes derived from the childhood memories of the participants were happy life; and hardship and poverty (see Table 4).

| Theme | Subtheme |
|-------------------|---|
| Hardship/ Poverty | Struggle as a child to finance his education. Child who works hard for people. Experience hardship and hunger Parents struggle to cater for our needs Unemployment and polygamy |
| Happy life | Security, sense of belonging (love) and Safety. Taking care. Comfortable life. Status of family clearly defined: financially stable. |

Table 5. Experience Through Childhood Memories: Themes From the Data Analysis.

4.3.1 Hardship and poverty

Unlike children who do not grow up in impoverish households, children living in deprivation, like some of the respondent of this study before the war, directly impacted on their wellbeing. The effect of poverty can be very pronounced and the normal way families are supposed to function is marred. According to the participants' narration, hardship and poverty means: the inability of the parents to provide for their children's basic needs such as paying for their education, shelter, food, clothing, and so on. Findings of this research reveals that parent insufficient income and less access to income due to unemployment were the contributing factors

to their deplorable conditions and hardship. Income of the family can affect young children's wellbeing and development during early years when is insufficient to meet their basic needs.

The most frequently mentioned reason by some of the participants for their parents not being able to cater for their basic needs was them having many children due to polygamy. Attempt to provide for so many children often failed, which further contributed to their already impoverish condition. When family size increases the numbers of children and wives compete for a small, limited amount of the family resources. A number of the respondents expressed anguish and dissatisfaction living in high level of poverty as it was a hindrance to their aspirations and dreams for the future and the likelihood that it will not be achieved. Their education had to suffer due to limited finance and disclosed their limited access, or no access at all, to basic needs especially food. The participants had been doing street hawking and menial jobs to fend and support themselves in school and feed. Finally the analysis of the respondent's narration of their living conditions also reveals that some of them did not feel secured in their houses, neighbourhood and school. They were living in poor households which are often found in deprived areas. These underprivileged neighbourhoods generated fears about personal safety and not an ideal environment for children personal development. Two of the respondents summed up their conditions that pertain at that time as follows:

Participant one

Life had been very challenging growing up. Am from a polygamous family.

My father had married three wives and my mother was married to my father's oldest brother as tradition demands, when my father passed away. My mother had five kids with him. She then married again and had three children. All this contributed to our already bad condition. When I was a child, my education was really down. I had to go and sell at the market to earn some money and support my mother to send me to school. My mother was an illiterate woman an unemployed so the possibility of supporting her children to school was a challenge. So we have to go out there and fend for ourselves. If the word poor will be the right word to define my family financial and economic position or social status, I can say then that am from a very low and poor family.

Participant two

Our father left our mother and went to stay somewhere else with another woman. At the age of 12, I had to sell and fend for myself because my mother could not cater for all our expenses. I remember that in the year 1988, my friend and I used to work at people's farms so that we can earn some money to eat but the people were not fair towards us. I had parents but they could not provide food for me and so sometimes, I go about begging for food. One day I got home and started crying bitterly because I did not understand why I had a mother but yet I go hungry. I was attending school alright but I was always sent home most often because my parents were struggling to pay my fees. 'I was an unhappy child, like other people get stuff and I wish I had that. My determination and intelligence in school helped as people came to my aid to pay my fees when I was sent home. The relatives of my father knew what was happening but they did not come to assist us. I am the only child of my mother who has gone to college.

Participant three

When I was a child, I didn't get things that I wanted. It was very sad. I saw that my friends were always talking about what their fathers bought for them during Christmas and other occasions and I did not have one to even boast of. I felt really sad. Because of this, I still pity myself and I am not confident too. I feel shy a lot because I feel that I am not good enough for anything and anyone.

4.3.2. Happy life

Participants also describe their childhood as happy period of their life as comfortable living where basic needs and wants are satisfied. Their narratives involved comfortable living and parents who provided for their basic needs and sense of security. The analysis of the fond memories of happy life some of the respondent had reveal that they felt safe and secured at their home and neighbourhood because they were living in a residential community where there is a strict controlled entrance. There was enough space in their home and their vicinity to play and enjoy themselves. A secured, loving and supportive home environment is essential necessity for

the wellbeing and growth of young children. They were well treated by their parents, peers and teachers alike. It also came out that the respondent never worried about money and where their next meal will come from because their parents were working class people and were financially stable to sufficiently provide enough to meet their needs and maintain a happy family. Some of the participant valued how their parents involved them in the decision making on matters that affect their life which was not the case of those who were living in deprivation due to their life conditions. Two participants narrated their experience as the following:

Participant one

Everything was ok because my father was a working class man; the pay master for the Liberian army. My mother was an international business woman until the death of my father and after the attack from the war, she lost everything. My dad used to take us to school. A car would take us to school and back, we had nannies taking care of us because my mum was not always at home. We had everything we needed. We were living in a wonderful neighbourhood. It was an estate and we were treated like royals during our childhood. We were staying in a big and well fenced house in the capital. I was born in Monrovia in Garnesville and living happily with my family and friends after school and on weekends.

Participant two

Ah actually before the war I was happily living with my parents, schooling and I thought that everything was bread and butter at that time. My father was a general in the Liberian army and my mother as a nurse. Nobody knew anything about hardship. My parents were able to provide for us until the war broke up and the things went upside down. My father's children were eleven but a few have been taken away. We are left with nine now. Among the nine are five boys and four girls

Participant three

I was attending Fire Stone High School with my elderly sister. It was the most exciting period of my life; living in a peaceful environment, playing with my

friends during break and having inter school quizzes on English and Mathematics. We were living in a secured environment and it was quite decent and everybody knew each other. During weekends we gather at the neighbourhood's compound and played with my friends whilst the boys played football and basketball. It was a quite exciting neighbourhood. My mother was a business woman and was always trying her best to make sure that she meet our meet. Although she was a single parent, she gave out her best.

4.4. Childhood dreams

Dreams and imaginations are part of a young children everyday life. Dreams for future are important cherishing aspiration, ambition, and ideals. They do not exactly foretell future events but give an indications of what the young child is likely to pursue in future. Young children possess a healthy dose of imagination that is why some dream of becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a nurse, social worker and so on. Children's dreams which are usually based on morals and values tend to change as they grow older. A more achievable dream is realized and fulfilling, coping with it take a major part of the mindset. Studying childhood dream is especially interesting in conditions of war and civil unrest. The external conditions made strong barriers to people's opportunity to achieve and realize their dream.

A question was asked about the participant's childhood dreams. This was asked to throw more light on the expectations of the participants in their current life. The participants had both ready and concrete plans in achieving their dream and wishes for generally good life. Concrete plans to the participants are those that are feasible and achievable (doable). They believe it is a definitive idea about: what to do, how to do it, and what order to do each step to bring that plan to fruition. Participant's childhood dreams were motivated by careers that are socially reputable and respected to gain some status in their community, as in most African societies certain professional careers are admired and regarded as prestigious. Some dream careers were also influenced by their professional working class parents and other relatives to model their career path and choices. The respondents who aspire to have a career in the health sector as doctors or

nurses were influence by their excellent knowledge in the science subjects. They show conviction in their scientific intelligence as important predictor for career attainment. Finally those respondents who were from poor background childhood dreams was informed by their desire to improve their social status, better provide for their family and get a profession that will guarantee them financial security and a comfortable life.

The entire thirteen participants' had concrete plans in fulfilling their purpose and living a meaningful life. Two responses of the participants are as follows:

Participants one

I wanted to work in many capacities though others have one focus in life but for me I wanted to be a social worker. In this social working area, I wanted to be an administrator and also be a doctor but for the dream of the doctor have not yet been achieved, but I am trying to see how best I can work for it. I have tried working after the social work aspect, the administrative aspect and at least I am arriving somewhere but now I am to pick the level of the doctor because I want to be the one that will make the voice in the wilderness crying to be heard and so passion can come to other people's lives

Participant two

I wanted also to become a medical doctor during high school days I was good at science subjects. My dream also as a child was having my own school and educating the orphans and the needy

4.5. Profound effect of childhood

The participants' were encouraged to define a specific conditions in their childhood that has had a profound effect on the way they look at life. The analysis revealed two different phenomena how past experience has impacted their lives. They were questions about adaptation and philosophy of life (see Table 6).

| Theme | Subtheme |
|-------|----------|
|-------|----------|

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Adaptation | Having a challenge coming to terms with his present circumstances. Not prepared for what is going through now. |
| Philosophy of life | Events are unpredictable. Perceived the world as wicked place. Life is not really fair. I do not take life to be anything or serious. |

Table 6: Profound Effect of Childhood: Themes From the Data Analysis.

4.5.1. Adaptation

Adaptation could result from psychological processes that change the way people think about their life experience and what meanings they give to them. As reported by the participants adaptation is how they feel about their lives, how they are adjusting to new demands and changed situation, and how they are generally coping in the host society. Some of the participants see the life at the refugee camp as a struggle and full of uncertainties because of impoverished conditions, hindering personal ambitions and goals and exposure to stressful demands. Analysis of some of the participant having a hard time adjusting to their new situation in the host environment stem from the fact that there is insufficient support from compassionate and benevolent people or organizations. Organizations and individuals coming to the aid of these people to provide practical support such as basic needs to ameliorate their plight have been non-existent.

Secondly, there are no opportunities for some participants who have some professional skills to gain access to the labour market in the host society. This situation has adversely impacted on them not being able to satisfy their basic needs. Results also reveal that it has also been challenging for some participant to regain control of their lives to develop their sense of belonging by building social networks beyond their few relations and friends at the refugee camp. Having social interactions and personal relationships help them to cope with their stressful conditions. Finally, there is a genuine feeling of loss of properties, a life of comfort and the

happy family some of the participants used to have before the war. Although some respondents are reeling in pain over the life of comfort they used to have, few have adjusted well and there is a sense of willingness and the drive to overcome their circumstance. They are holding their heads high in the face of adversities and living one dream at a time. Some respondents expressed some of their feelings in this manner:

Participant one

I was living a comfortable life with my family before the war. Life was pretty good and I was an excellent student but the war came to destroy it all. Looking back the closely knit family and the life of comfort I had as a child before the war, I still cannot come to terms with the struggles am going through as a refugee though am a university student on scholarship.

Participant two

I was having it all, real wealth and my family could afford anything for me and my siblings. Now I found myself in a refugee camp struggling to feed and cater for my son. It is difficult to come to terms with this situation as I was not prepared for what am going through. War change life, we lost everything and I can forget it all.

4.5.2. Philosophy of life

Most participants have built their own philosophies as their current worldview is based on their past experience and present circumstances at the refugee camp. This perception created may be termed as prejudice but in essence everyone has his/her own worldview generated from the society they live in, whether from the norms or values of it. Almost all the participants whether from rich or poor background perceived the world as wicked and unfair place to live due to the fact that the course of their family life has been change forever and they lack emotional support. As refugees they have become statistics instead of being citizens of their nation. When one sense of belonging is disrupted, properties and material wealth destroyed the experience can be overwhelming and can change ones opinion of the world.

Secondly, the devastation witnessed and atrocities committed against the participants during the war and in flight have contributed to their ill perception of the world. The participants emphasized that relations or neighbours that were trusted in the phase of the war turn out to be enemies and traitors, killing and abusing people they have lived with for years during the war. Basically the participant's view of the world has been threatened by their experience in war.

Finally, it is typical for refugees to inevitably compare their new surroundings to what they have lost. The respondents feel dejected when they perceive a difference in life conditions and those of the host society, especially when they see their age mate in the resident population living their dream life they wonder if life is fair. In the words of one participant "If I see a Ghanaian guy having all sort of degrees and other things, I feel hurt." The need deprivation, their economic situation at the refugee camp and failure for many of the respondents not to be able to achieve their childhood dreams of professional careers has reinforced their belief as the world being unfair and a wicked place to live in.

Participant one

Yes, it makes me feel that the world is a wicked place to be in. The worst is to kill people you know because of jealousy. I perceive the world as a bad place but the world is determined by how you make it

Participant two

Yes. I believe the world is not a fair place to be, because there are a lot of people who are living in poverty and without food for days while there are some people who have in abundance and are not willing to help anyone.

Participant three

It sometimes changes the way I look at things because I don't take life to be anything because of what I went through. It has made me to know that in life, anything can happen at any time. Life is not really fair because most people who commit such wrongful acts do not pay back and the victim is left to wallow in pain because they are left in grief.

4.6. War experience

War is one worst experience for humanity. Armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have targeted civilians which have resulted in human right abuses, fatalities and intolerable atrocities on innocent lives. The Liberian civil war that protracted for fourteen (14) years provides a sad example. Participants were asked about their experience in war and analyses of their responses revealed three themes. They are humiliation and abuse, survival and life threat, and loss of family (see Table 7)

| Theme | Subtheme |
|--------------------------|--|
| Humiliation and abuse | Abducted and conscripted as a child soldier Induced by drug to cry the battle cry. Torturing and beaten by rebels Sexual assault (Rape) |
| Survival and life threat | Fleeing for one's life Scarcity of food and water.(hunger) Living in a state of fear as death was a bullet away |
| Loss of family | Father and uncle executed Mother beaten to death by rebels Brother butchered to death. |

Table 7: War Experience: Themes From the Data Analysis.

4.6.1. Humiliation and abuse

When a country is ravaged by war it is the children and the vulnerable in society who become the victims of abuse and humiliation. This was also the fate of the participants. According to the participant's accounts, war caused them humiliation, abuse and violence. They had lost their human rights, were living in life danger and lacked physical safety. The participants disclosed that the magnitude of humiliation and abuse that was perpetuated against civilians by state forces

and rebel groups was unimaginable and horrific. Participants had either experienced one form of abuse or publicly witnessed the commission of human right violation of family members and others. The analysis of the participant's narration revealed prevalent forms of abuses they and their families were subjected to, including sexual torture, rape, indiscriminate killings, witnessing loved ones being tortured or battered, and forceful abduction or held in detention. One participant narrated how her elder sibling was gang raped by some armed group and, currently, because of her experience, she had developed a strong revulsion for men and sexual intimacy. She thinks that as a woman she has lost her dignity and value. Rape and other forms of human right violation that was perpetrated by the armed groups was a tool to instil fear, intimidate and humiliate their victims, thereby rendering them powerless and helpless.

Results also show that two participants were forcibly abducted and conscripted as a child soldiers. Although these two participants saw it as a violation of their right and stolen innocence, they also disclosed that some voluntarily join to protect themselves and their family. Their decision to voluntarily join the rebel group was based on survival rather than an exercise of abuse. In some circumstances the only means not to starve to death was willing join the rebel group as there was no reliable access to food for sustenance for all families during the civil unrest. One participant emphasized that he feels ashamed when he remembers the things he was forced to do as a child soldier and the rejection he faced after the war from few people made him feel guilty the more. Participants narrated their experience as the following:

Participant one

I was also forced to harm, as a child soldier. If you say no, then you are an enemy to the revolution and you will be conscripted to join the group to fight. You will stay in the bush and not come to town because if you do, you will be forced to fight and so I stayed in the bush. Failure to take arms will lead to terrible consequences, you will be forced to do so or induce by drugs to become numb for you to cry the battle cry. When they do that, you will become insensitive and then you take the arms and go for war. You will see an elderly woman and you are asked to strip her naked, they ask you to kill this man and other horrible stuff. This is abuse of one's rights.

Participant two

You see, when the rebels got to our land, they made us to shoot anyone who had food as well as animals. The people started fleeing into the bush for their dear lives and they captured the women, girls and raped them. This was something I wouldn't have done if it had not been for the rebels who forced me to. When I think about them, I feel like ending it all, by killing myself.

Participant three

My first childhood memory was when my mother was running away from the war due her tribe. She was from Grangedeh and so she was wanted by the rebels. My father was a government official, working as a police colonel. Actually I was a little boy and so I do not remember much. Afterwards my father was taken and we were put in a pick up to be taken away to a firing squad but we escaped and went to my mother's hometown and stayed there for a year.

4.6.2. Survival and life threat

When civil strife erupt survival becomes vital. Embarking on that perilous expedition in bushes and raining forest to the place of safety can be a tortuous one as in many cases you can walk into the fire or the den of the warring factions. The experience given by participants fleeing for survival from the war was similar. Almost all started they have to walk for days and often weeks to get to the place of safety. Food and water according to the participants was scarce to non-existent. They had to live on wild fruits for sustenance or in some cases boil leaves to eat to give them little strength to keep them going. Some emphasize that lack of food and water led to death by starvation of close family members and vulnerable individuals they were walking with to neighbouring countries. They reported being haunted by both the warring factions, with the knowledge that if found especially with the females they will be taken as "bush wives" or raped and the males forcibly abducted to fight. Below are some of the stories expressed by the participants.

Participant one

When we were in the interior, it got to a time that I couldn't go to school again because I was afraid that the rebels would get me and make me a "bush wife" and be raped by many rebels. We were living in fear because our death was a bullet away. We were getting little or no food to neither eat nor water to drink and we were also walking bare footed with tattered clothes. Our lives were unbearable. When I imagine the past, I feel like crying

Participant two

I remember during those times, I had walked for a long time and there was no food around and so we uprooted cassava and ate them raw just to survive. It is more frustrating to know that you need education to make your future bright but unfortunately you do not get the chance. Sometimes when I picture the war and how we were walking in the bushes for days and months to a place of safety. How people were looking for food and water which was even not there, my brother, it bring tears into my eyes, it was not easy at all.

Participant three

I was nearly raped by one of the rebels, in front of my mother but I don't know what happened and all of a sudden, he asked us to run out of the place. I remember my mother went out one day to look for food then she met some of the rebels and they asked for money but she did not have and they beat her to death. My mother never recovered from that beating. My brother was also shot when some rebels came to ask for money and food. That scene still horrifies me till now. I was running and hiding from the rebels and they were killing adults and children. If I remember it, it brings pain and tears. It was just by grace that I got to Ghana

Participant four

In the process of running, a stray bullet missed my hand but scratched my left arm. We went through the forest and the bushes. My grandfather had a cattle farm at that time so when the war broke out, we decided to go there since we could not find our mum. We thought she would be there. When we went there, the rebels were on the farm and they had killed my grandfather. They were just killing the cattle one after the other and so we decided to run. While we were running we

wounded ourselves when going through the bushes and forests. I stepped on a twig and it went into my left leg. It was a deep wound which lasted for six months because there was no medication.

4.6.3. Loss of family

Participants described family loss as disintegration of their family unit due to death, separation, estrangement and other losses during the civil war. When civil war breaks out it alters life and severs family relationships which deprive children of a nurturing environment and emotional attachment from loved ones. All the participants shared one common trait the pain of personal loss. Almost every participant had lost a family member during the war, some their breadwinners. It has deprived them of the security, love and protection from their family. Few participants are still being haunted and suffering from the devastating loss of family members. The presence of their family would have given meaning to their lives and help them cope with the traumatic experience of the war. Lack of support or the absence of their loved ones will lead them feeling vulnerable and distraught. Several participants up till date still do not know the whereabouts of close family members whether alive or dead. In the face of brutal onslaught during armed conflict survival becomes an individual affair and families are bound to be separated and sometimes lose contacts altogether. As my interviewees accounted it can take quite a considerable period of time before they reunite. Sometimes the whole life, before they reunite. The impact of their family loss is vividly expressed by some participants as follows.

Participant one

My dad said we and our mother should try and escape and so we started to run. The car we took was taken away by the soldiers before we got there and so we had to use the bush. We wanted to run away to La Cote d'Ivoire. By then I was only wearing my underwear and a short knickers and my slippers were torn so I walked with my bare feet. As we were running, I don't know where my mother and my siblings passed because I couldn't find them and so I entered into the

other country alone. My father was killed behind me and so I didn't hear from him

Participant two

My father and his brother were executed by a man who is now the senator of Liberia. When my father died, I became confused and didn't know what to do. I even have the video of how my dad and uncle were executed. This has had a significant impact on my dreams and aspirations in life. Am stuck here in a refugee camp with a lot of challenges.

Participant three

My cousin was put on a table and butchered with an axed by a rebel group called LPC. We had escape and run into the bush when we heard they were coming. They found him hiding in the kitchen and brought him into the open and brutally killed him. It was such a horrific incident to witness as we watch from the bushes. All we could do is hear him screaming to such a painful death.

4.7. Impact of war

Children are adversely affected by armed conflict due to loss of family, disruption of their school, altering of the family relationship and household income, post war trauma and so on. The impact of war was sought to ascertain how the participants were affected by their experience in war. Three themes emerge from the devastating consequence of war on the participant's lives. That is effects of war, hardship and learning, and psychological effects (see Table 8).

| Theme | Subtheme |
|--|---|
| Loss of safety and childhood innocence | Disruption of education Poverty/Material loss Robbed them of a desired life. Setbacks in the life of the children. |
| Hardship and learning | What does not kill you makes you strong Difficulties are part of life. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | Strengthen by the experience of war. Decide what you want to do with your life. |
| Long-term memories and atrocities | Recalling war experience brings nightmare. Trauma as a present reality Decreasing hope in the future/vulnerability |

Table 8: Impact of War: Themes from the Data Analysis.

4.7.1. Loss of safety and childhood innocence

Civilians, particularly children suffer the effects of war. One of the gravest effects of war is the way it disrupts and destroys children's education. Many participants' hopes for education were ruined by the war, or they tried to continue to study in their destroyed communities and refugee camps. The fear and disruption during conflict made it impossible to have a conducive atmosphere to learn. Some stated all that their parents have worked for and their properties were destroyed during the civil unrest which has put a huge strain on their current lives restricting them affordability to school fees. Basically they have to stop schooling when they arrived in the refugee camp in Ghana. One participants gave an apt description of the effect of war by stating this "It is just like there is an umbrella and everybody is under that umbrella but all of a sudden, the umbrella was taken away and so you have to endure the scorching sun" This shows how some participants have to endure difficult and challenging situations because their benefactors are no more.

Secondly, some of the female participants reported that their friends engage in reckless and self-destructive activities like prostitution for survival. Because some of them were abused during the war they engage in this practice to find validation. Also their present challenging condition have made some vulnerable to fall prey to the ills of society. Getting involved in prostitution to them is a means to financial gains. Participants reported the following

Participant one

Somehow, it has stopped me from enjoying life because if it had not been for the war which destroyed my family, I would have gone to school and by now my

parents would be alive to take care of me. Like by now my father would be fending for us. It is just like there is an umbrella and everybody is under that umbrella but all of a sudden, the umbrella was taken away and so you have to endure the scorching sun and so I would say that it has kept me from enjoying life.

Participant two

The war robbed me of my education and made poverty to come to my family. I remember that one time in the camp, my sisters were threatening my mum to enter into prostitution because they believed that those girls were not better than them and also they needed money to take care of themselves. My mother broke down in tears and began to beg them not to make that decision. I felt terrible and it was the worst moment of my life in the camp because it made me cry the whole day and I felt like ending it all. As I am recalling these things to you, I am feeling pain in my heart

Participant three

Yes, I should have completed my first degree and working by now. Sometimes I have to sleep without food and struggle to finish a vocational school. It is painful to see my age mates who are Ghanaians, driving their own cars and to see me still struggling with what to eat. It is not fair at all. If it had not been the war, like by now, I would also be enjoying life and working as a professional nurse in a big hospital. If I enter into prostitution today, it will be because I need money to survive

Participant four

It took my life backwards. My aunty was prepared me through to the university but the rebels took away her money and everything she had ever worked for so she was not able to fulfil her promise. This has been a major setback for me. I was hoping to become a medical dream but now all hope is lost. The war took away my dream, my family, our house, my aunt's business and now I am here at the camp still struggling to learn something from the vocational school. If it had not been for the war, I would have become a medical doctor

Participant five

Yes it has because if it had not been the war, I would have by now finished my masters and be doing my PhD. It has been a life of setbacks. It has hindered all my progresses. If I see Ghanaian guys holding degrees and other things, I feel hurt. Am still with education. You are not working but living under the benevolence of people or international aids. It has been a life of backwardness, is not an enjoyable life at all. It have had a negative implication when it comes to living a fulfilled life. Living in a refugee camp when you are not working, praying that you don't get sick because there is no money to go to hospital.

4.7.2. Hardship increases endurance

Participants' believe hardship as learning experience is their willingness and resilience to overcome challenging circumstances in the face of uncertain future. When conflict breakout people are affected and are force to flee their country and seek shelter in neighbouring countries as it was the case of these respondents. The participants told how they had to rapidly adapt to changing societal conditions and make something meaningful out of their lives so that they can be useful to themselves and the country of origin. Regardless of their traumatic past and the challenges that confronts them daily some participants have regain control of their lives rather than having their lives influence by impoverished conditions. They have learnt a lot from the separation and loss from the civil war. They believe as human beings you do not know how strong and resilient you are until you are force to bring that hidden strength forward to make a change in your life. Among the male participants one has finish his master's degree and three are about to complete their first degree whiles the female participants are undertaken vocational training to equip themselves with productive skills.

Participant one

If I look at the war, the things that we went through, even apart from the ones that happened to us before fleeing our country, if you look at the hardships and difficulties Liberians went through here in Ghana, to help themselves to stand on

their feet and live a better life was not easy at all. And I noticed that that I am challenged to be able to rise up from that dungeon of difficulties and hopelessness, I came up to say, yes I must go there at the top and see what I can do for my life. To transform my life and be able to transform other people's lives around me. That has been the influential aspect of my life that I noticed in time past. Even sitting and chatting here with you has made me know the things that God can do. I have been able to get a degree as well as a master's degree. Today I have achieved something in my life.

Participant two

It has strengthened me to either do something for myself. I would have been wallowing in pain and engaged in self-destruction, throwing my hands into despair and blaming them all my life. They did what they thought was right in their sight but the Lord saw me through. I am not going to let myself be down by past events, no matter how tragic and traumatic it was I will press on. I want to make use of every opportunity that I get to better my life because what is ahead of me is great.

4.7.3. Long-term memories and atrocities

Children are exposed to traumatic effects during armed conflict. The horror and devastation witnessed at the developing stage could affect their behaviour, memory, perception and so on. Virtually all participants reported feeling of negative emotions such as anxiety, loneliness, distress, fear and so on. . The disruption in their lives and the bereavement experienced during the war by many participants accounted for the depression and anxiety feeling. Regardless of their attempt to forget their hurtful past experience, participants reveal having recurring nightmares and thought about the indiscriminate killings, multiply and gang rapes, torture and the rest of horrific devastation they witnessed by both state forces and rebel groups. Disturbed sleep or intrusive images was commonly reported by virtually all participants. A participants whose distressful moment during the war was when her brother was brutally tortured and butchered to death in front of her family recounted how she use to have persistent nightmares

and distressing recollections about that dreadful incident and how it has affected her relationship with people at the refugee camp. She felt detached and estranged from other people.

Second, many indicated that they generally stay away from situation or events that awaken memories of their past experience. Some usual comments reported were: “I stay away from crowded areas”, “I don’t like seeing blood or people fighting,” and “I avoid arguments or getting angry”.

Third, although Liberia is at peace now and have had two successful democratic elections some participant emphatically stated there will never go back to a place where their family and loved ones have been killed and tortured. What necessitated their decision is the expression of fear and apprehension towards the place they have experiences so many traumas. Few expressed the willingness to go when the economic situation are right and favourable. Participants said the following:

Participant one

Seeing my brother being tortured to death by the rebels when I and my family were escaping from the war. It was such horrid sight to behold and on top of it the rebels ask us all to clap about the incident. This has had an impact on me up to date if I recall the incident tears fill my eyes. When I came to the refugee camp I always do have nightmare about.

Participant two

My aunt that was killed during the war affected me because at that time, I was with her and it was a traumatic experience for me. Till date is still horrifies me if i recall. I had to struggle on my own before I was fortunate to be put on a ship that was coming to Ghana

Participant three

I don’t want to go back to Liberia. I have just purpose in my mind never to go back to Liberia. People has been going and coming even some of my friends but I have resolved never to go there. Our house and everything of my parents have been destroyed, what I am going to do there if I may ask u?

4.8. Evaluation of significant life events

In the evaluation of significant life events, happy and sorrowful moments were the main themes that were derived from participants' narration (see Table 9). All the participants had experienced a sorrowful and happy event which have influenced their lives.

| Theme | Subtheme |
|------------------|---|
| Happy Moment | Opportunity to get university education Save by the peacekeepers Opportunity to get vocational training |
| Sorrowful moment | Loss of parents |

Table 9: Evaluation of Significant Life events: Themes from the Data Analysis.

4.8.1 Happy moment

Happy moment according to the participant something that is characterized by or indicative of pleasure; or has brought contentment; or joy and has transform otherwise gloomy life. Although the participants living as refugees in a foreign land comes with it daily challenges and struggles some have been able to achieve something which have brought joy and a turning point in their lives. To some male participants getting admission at the university was seen as a major mile stone in their lives whiles the majority of the female participants interviewed having the opportunity to undergo vocational training was a leap of joy in their lives. The participants see as an improvement in their lives and opportunity for them to be architects of their own destiny. Few attribute the period in the war when they were saved by peacekeepers as the happy moment in their lives. Some participants shared their happy moments as follows:

Participant one

My turning point was me coming to Ghana and going through vocational training in the camp. I have been able to improve upon my life although I did not complete

my high school. By the grace of God, I have been able to learn something new from the vocational school

Participant two

The turning point will be when I got admission to the university in 2010 after completing secondary school in 2001. At that time, I was teaching in a secondary school as a math teacher's assistant at the camp. It brought some joy and light to my life.

4.8.2. Sorrowful moment

Sorrowful moment to the participants is an intense sorrow caused by loss of a loved one or closed a relative that have had an impact on the bereaved. Most of the participants termed the death of a parent or a benefactor as the most significant experience in their lives. Much of the pain associated with loss of a parent involves anxiety and sorrow throughout a period of time. The knowledge that they will not have the affection and support of their loved one is still difficult for some participants to overcome the anxiety and sorrow associated with losing a parent. They reported also that their loss reduced the investments in their education and had a long lasting implication on the quality of life and livelihood. Some participants have to drop out of school because their inability to meet the educational financial obligations. The participants expressed their feelings as follows

Participant one

The influential experience I had in my life was when I lost my mother. Sobbing.... It was very painful. It brought my life to a standstill because at that stage of my life, she was my backbone. Until now, I have not been able to recover from her death.

Participant two

The turning point of my life was when I lost my dad during the war and my uncle who took over also got paralyzed in the United States and brought back to

Liberia. These two people were the major contributors to my education and I had to drop out of school. I became very sad.

4.9. Future Prospects

The participants were asked about their future prospects. Their response was reflecting what they wished and what their dream expectations in life and believes what they can do, and how much they can influence it. The analysis showed three main themes which were hopes and ambition; serving humanity or empathy to help others; and social activism (see Table 10).

| Theme | Subtheme |
|--------------------|---|
| Hopes and Ambition | Become civil educationist Peace Advocates. Empowerment through development |
| Serving Humanity | Support the deprived and underprivileged Compassionate feelings for others |
| Social Activism | Be the voice for the voiceless Campaign for equitable distribution of national resources. The drive for positive change Social order and respect for ones rights |

Table 10: Future Prospects: Themes from the Data Analysis.

4.9.1. Hopes and Ambition

Every individual have different goal and ambition in life. To the participants hopes and ambition is the desire and determination to achieve a personal goal. Some participants are optimistic about the future regardless of the challenging situation confronting them. Some envisioned themselves becoming a peace and civil educationalist in the near future. They want to go back to Liberia and

starts educate people about the need to coexist in peace and harmony and not allow themselves to be used by politicians to commit atrocities in a bid to satisfy their political ambition. They seem to have a well-structured plan achieving this future goal. One way according to the participants to achieve this goal is through sports, organizing unity games to promote friendship.

Secondly, some emphasized the desire to return to their homeland to educate people on the need to be a responsible citizen of one's nation and what meaningful contribution you can make to the sustainable development of your nation. Especially, few female participants who have undergone vocational training express the willingness to return to their homeland and empower people with the requisite skills to become positive contributors to society and rulers of their destiny. In the midst of challenging conditions these participant envisioned a better future, in which their goals and ambition will be realized. Their difficult experience and the desire to make a difference in their homeland seem to be the driving force and motivation. Few have lost hope and pessimistic about the future. They believe the future is not in their hands and have left it to destiny. The following statement echoes their ambition:

Participant one

Right now, my uttermost ambition and goal for life is to see Liberia come back to light because I have noticed Liberia has been brain drained and starting from scratch is not an easy task. Lots of things have happened and things have gone to zero. So we have to pick up from that place and put Liberia back up. So in order to do that ,I need to gather people and myself to training and for that reason, I decided to go on a training as a facilitator on an organization known as Europe Inter Agency for Peace, and stay as a facilitator and peace educationist and then to areas I was trained for conflict resolutions in Ghana here. I was trained by some expatriates too.

Participant two

We should live in peace and forgive. We should not be misled by politicians because most of the wars are caused by politicians when they want power to satisfy their selfish ambition. I want to be a civil educationist to teach people on how bad wars can be. I want to teach people what it means to be a citizen of one's

nation and what meaningful contribution you can make to the sustainable development of your nation. Not things that will stir up strife and bring your country into flames and backwardness.

Participant three

My life has become dull. Right now I do not know where to start from or where my life will end me. Anything I find, I do to keep living. My family is gone, all dead or I don't know if some are alive. Is only God who knows what I will become in future?

4.9.2. Serving Humanity

Empathy to help others according to the participants is the experience of sympathetic emotions and concern for others. Most of the participants emphasized that they have a good sense or understand the predicament of what it means for a person to be in need because they have been in similar situation during the war. The deprivation of basic needs like water and food they experience in flight during the war have encourage majority of the participants to feel compassion towards the needy and the less fortunate. In the near future extending helping hand to the deprived and the underprivileged is the moral obligation on the minds of majority of the participants. Some female participants dream of building an orphanage as they see it as their service to mankind. One participant stated the following.

Participant one

I want to help the people in need as well as the society and my neighbourhood. I have resolved to dedicate my life to serve humanity because I understand what it means to be in need. The experiences of the war have driving me into this direction to help those in need. I know what it means for a person to tell me that they have not eaten for days. I have that obligation to be of service to mankind.

4.9.3. Social Activism

Social activism to the participants is a voluntary action with the sole aim of bringing about direct social change and transformation. Few of the participants are driven by their experience in war to become an activist, assume leadership role to challenge the status quo in their country to effect a change and a new social order. Most of the male participants want to return to their homeland especially the few lucky university graduates and start fighting for the concerns of the poor, the marginalized, abuse and those in misery in general. They believe there is the need for the equitable distribution of the resources to every citizen of Liberia and development must be extended to the door steps of all. The youth to the participants must form part of all sectors of governance to erase the notion of marginalization and exclusion, as these negative feeling can lead to chaos and mayhem in the country. The need for positive change in their political governance where everybody have the opportunity to make choice and enjoys their basic needs in a free democratic society underlines their pursuit for social activism. Participants stated the following:

Participant one

My uttermost dream as I said I wanted to be a servant to people that was my dream. To make the voice of those people suffering somewhere to come out and I should be the medium for those voices to come out. So I have that passion to go down there to the unheard voices or people who have been denied access to certain things for me to be of help to them. Like an activist for them or a voice to the voiceless.

Participant two

This hardship I experience at early stage has kept me focus and I would have die if I have listen to my friends to join Charles Taylor's small boy army. It has also made me to always go to the aid of the needed and be the voice for the voiceless. Am empowered by what I went through to fight for change in my society and country as a whole to bring a change in their lives. I believe development must be extended to all. That is basic human needs must be accessible to all.

4.10. Forgiveness

Forgiveness to the participants is the eliminating negative emotional feelings, thoughts and behaviour towards their perpetrators. Here a question was asked on participants feeling towards the offender, how they would act towards the perpetrator(s) in the present and finally their thoughts about their perpetrators. This was asked by the researcher to examine the role forgiveness play in their war experience. Four themes were derive from their responses; that is religious belief; healing; justice and personal choice (see table 11).

| Theme | Subtheme |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Religious Belief. | Faith in God Vengeance is the lord As a Christian follow tenets of the bible. Means to strengthen my relationship with God |
| Apology and Act contrition | Apologize for their inhumane act. Acknowledge their wrongs and show remorse Genuine repentance from the offenders |
| Justice | Perpetrators should pay the ultimate prize(prosecution) An eye for an eye. |
| Personal Choice | Life must go on Key to self-liberation and healthier life Old things have pass and things have become new |
| Influence of political figures | Inspiration to forgive. |

Table 11: Forgiveness: Themes from the Data Analysis.

4.10.1. Religious belief

An individual desire to grant forgiveness to perpetrators can be based on various strategies including religion, spirituality and so on. Majority of the participants of this study were Christians and they did emphasize their decision to go beyond their hurt to forgive the perpetrators was intrinsically linked to their religious faith. Analysis of the participant's dependency on the Christian belief to forgive was motivated by enhancing their relationship with their divine maker, God and following his footsteps. Participants reported the only pathway to draw closer to God, is to let go off their resentment and forgive their offenders. Failure not to forgive will sever their relationship with God.

Some participants revealed that God sacrificing Jesus Christ as atonement for sinful humanity serve as example for all Christians to follow suit, as one participant posited, "We forgive because Christ the son of God died for our sins." For that reason, there is the need to forgive the people who violated our human rights, as "born again" Christian. Few also stated as a Christian is mandatory to forgive as the bible stipulate and therefore oblige to express this compassionate act even if the person is undeserving. They believe having an unforgiving heart inhibits you from loving your enemy as yourself which is fundamental to the doctrine of Christ.

Secondly, their reliance on their Christian faith helps them to cope with the psychological trauma and gave meaning to their losses. Attending church service, praying and reading the bible gave the participants a renew hope and strength to live above the challenges confronting them in the refugee camp. Participants stated the following.

Participant one

We are told in church to forgive and as Christian I believe in the tenets of Christianity. I have to let go of the pains and forgive those who hurt me. It is difficult and challenging but that is what the bible says. As vengeance is the lord so who am I to repay evil with evil. Failure to forgive will hinder your relationship with God. There will not be any difference between me and the person who wronged me. An eye for an eye leaves us all blind.

Participant two

As a Christian is my duty to forgive as the bible teaches. It will also will strengthen my relationship with God and improve my mental health. As person who wants to serve the people, I have to embrace all sort of characters even those who hurt the most. I have to forgive to serve my purpose on this earth to be the voice for the under privilege. God has forgiven my sins by sacrificing his son and so why can't I also do the same to others. Just have to follow his footsteps.

Participant three

I believe there is the need to forgive as it frees your soul and liberate you from pain. If God forgives us our sins why can't we mortals forgive one another if they wronged as, if we call ourselves Christians. It is difficult and painful to let go of the pains and harm the person has cost you but there is liberty and healing in forgiveness if you can go through the process

4.10.2. Apology

Apology to the participants is the acceptance of responsibility and expression of remorse for the heinous act committed against them. Some participants started in order for them to forgive perpetrators of the war must public apologize for their wrongful act of violence committed against them. They see it as one avenue that will facilitate and aid the process of forgiveness whiles affirming that perpetrators should not expect that after the apology forgiveness will happen spontaneously. Participants emphasized the acknowledgement of the deliberate act of violence by the offended must be accompanied by a positive emotional action. The apology must be genuine and sincere in order for them to forgive to decrease negative thoughts, feelings and behaviour towards the offender.

Expression of remorse by the offenders' means that they accept responsibility and admit they were wrong for the violent act perpetuated against their victims in the past. Secondly, they empathize with their victims in their pain and material loss. This allows the victim to make a decision whether or not to forgive and gives them assurance that past wrongs will not be

repeated. It offers the offender the opportunity to re-establish and mend the broken relationship with the victim. All these is gear towards the victims reclaiming their self-respect and dignity which was trampled upon. Participants said the following.

Participant one

Yes, because they did not know what they were doing. Some were influenced by drugs, although I am not justifying their action but I pray that they forgive themselves for all the harm they have caused. I wish they turn a new leaf, repent and apologize to the entire populace before we all can forgive them.

Participant two

It will be very difficult for me to lend a helping hand to the offender as they do not deserve it that because they did not do any good to me. Those people do not deserve any help or forgiveness from any one because they brought about the war and have caused a lot of people to die and so I do not think I will help them. Even if I will forgive them they have to genuinely accept and apologize for the atrocities committed.

Participant three

It is good to forgive because as you think badly about the person, it will affect you. You will be overloading yourself with negative thoughts and your heart will be weakened. Forgiveness is the key but the basis of forgiveness should be genuine repentance and sincere apology. They must confess to you from their hearts and apologize. Some people came to me and were confessing to me that I should forgive them and I did. Reconciliation should not be just sharing of drinks and smiling, it should be from the heart.

4.10.3. Justice (retributive)

Although there was a call for apology by majority of the participants to aid the healing process, few of the participants explained that forgiveness requires justice. Justice to the participants is punishment of the offender for grievous war crime or atrocious act committed against them.

They believe perpetrators should face prosecution for war crimes at domestic or regional court of the international criminal court to negate impunity and serve as deterrence in the future. This will also create some balance between the victims and the perpetrators. One participant stated “I want them to taste the same bitter pill they force it down our throat”. Secondly they few who seek justice felt that by imprison the perpetrators it will alleviate their pain and suffering they have put them through.

Analysis of the call for justice by few participants was necessitate by the unwillingness of the state to prosecute some perpetrators for the deliberate act of violence committed in the past. They revealed some still have sufficient power holding key positions in the current administration. In the words of one participants “the person who killed my father and uncle is still a senator in Liberia so how can I get justice, he quizzed”. The call for justice although desirable it looks seemingly impossible. Participants stated the following:

Participant one

Though I have forgiven them for the crime they committed against me and my family. They still need to accept their fault, that they were wrong for taking the Liberian populace through such torture. They also must be prepared to face the laws of the land or face the international tribunal for war crimes. Then we all can wholeheartedly forgive and move on as one nation.

Participant 2

It is my prayer that the bad things they did to me should also happen to them. I want the Law of Moses to be applied on them; an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If they do not get the punishment, their family members should encounter it. Before I am able to forgive them, they have to accept their mistakes and repent genuinely from them. As I said they have to pay the ultimate prize and face the court of the land or the international court of justice.

4.10.4. Personal Choice

For some participants forgiving their perpetrators was born out of personal decision and choice. That is their willingness to let go of their personal resentment and vengeful thought and embrace more positive emotional feelings towards the offender. The few participants who stated personal choice as the basis to forgive reported their war experience has cost them so much emotional pains and have threatened their physical wellbeing. To the participants failure to deal genuinely with your past hurts and allowing it to fester will lead to depressive symptoms. Therefore forgiveness is the only way to liberate themselves from the emotional imprisonment. One participants when asked about whether he has forgiven his offenders stated all sins are forgivable. Although it was a dent on my pride and took the offence so personal and was blaming myself. I have extended a touch of human kindness to the offenders to gain my pride back he surmised.

Other participant revealed that, the singular act of forgiveness have helped him to draw up his inner resources in a more confident way to approach the challenging future that confronts him. This suggest forgiveness could enable the participants to be compassionate and be empathetic towards the offenders for their past deliberate acts of violation. The following were stated by the participants:

Participants one

It is good to forgive because as you think badly about the person, it will affect you. You will be overloading yourself with negative thoughts and your heart will be weakened. Forgiveness is the key to self-liberation and healthy life. I have to because life must still go on

Participant two

I feel that whatever has happened is in the past because if I continue to think about it, it will have an effect on my health and wellbeing. One time, I saw those that killed my cousin. I tried to attack them and I asked myself is it worth it. Upon second thought I realized it was not. You just have to let go of the trauma, forgive and forge ahead to better your life.

4.10.5. Influence of political figures

Few of the participant indicated that they were inspired to forgive because they want to follow the footsteps renowned individuals who went through inhumane and profound injustice but yet when they rose through the position of power and forgave their offenders.

Participant one

Like Nelson Mandela who went through a struggle, fighting for the abolition of apartheid and equal rights for all citizens in his country. Rising to the position of power that he could have paid his offenders for subjecting him into an inhumane act forgave them and called for reconciliation for the purpose of peaceful coexistence. This has really influence my life and I also want to follow his footsteps and forgive my offenders.

4.11. Conclusion

Several researches have been made on impact of wars on adolescent wellbeing and development. The effects of war on an individual's life have been sought in many researches. Results from this study as depicted above shows that war victims have either bad or good memories; their dreams are shattered while others fulfil new ones; new philosophies are built; lastly, forgiveness is possible.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. DISCUSSION

This study was set out to understand war experiences of adolescents, the role forgiveness plays in their experiences and how they see their future. It also considered the consequences of their experience towards their future aspirations. The interviewees were young adults' Liberian refugees living in Buduburam, Ghana who had spent their childhood in conditions of armed conflict. The focal point of the discussion will be on the themes that emerge from interviewee's childhood memories and their experience during the war. Their aspirations and hopes towards the future as well as the participants conditions to forgive their perpetrators. Finally limitations of the study are also included in this chapter.

5.1. Childhood memories before the war

5.1.1. Hardship and Poverty

Participants reported growing up in poverty and experiencing hardships before the war. The interviewees of this study indicated that they had been suffering from lack of food and other basic needs, in addition to difficulties of paying for their education or clothing. Many were living in poor households, which coloured their experiences. Many reported varied kinds of hardships during childhood. UNICEF (2004) characterizes a child living in poverty as being deprived of basic material and emotional needs, as well as lacking social support and services that are necessary to ensure the growth and development of the child. The conception of poverty and hardship from the interviewees' perspectives highlighted parental insufficient income due to unemployment, and having many children as a result of polygamy as factors accountable for their poverty. Participants indicated being born into extreme deprivation or growing up in hardship affected their general wellbeing and did cast doubts on their attainment of success in adulthood. Their narratives witnessed that effect of poverty can be far reaching and damaging to a child. Similar to Ridge (2009) they described how it leads to uncertainty and insecurity, weakening children's self-esteem, and making them feel powerless. Interviewees expressed

frustration and unhappiness in growing up in poverty. Hooper, Gorin, Cabral and Dyson (2007) examined the diverse experience of families living in poverty in England. Similar to the results of this study, their findings indicated extreme stresses and anxiety poverty can bring to bear on the lives of children.

First, participants revealed that their education suffered due to limited finance. Studies have showed that poverty has a significant correlation between children's or adolescents' future aspiration and decrease the plausibility that they will be achieved or attained (see, Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997/2000). The reason being that parents are incapable to finance or support their participants' education, which is denying them the realistic opportunities of attaining or pursuing their childhood dreams. Poverty limit school achievement (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Participants reported that they did not feel secured in their houses, neighbourhood and school. An exploratory study by Rice (2006) comparing the lives of children living in bad housing conditions in Britain shows similar phenomenon. The results revealed many challenges confronting the children living in bad housing conditions, including difficulties in sleeping, studying and playing in their own house because of deplorable conditions and overcrowding. A conducive and a protective home environment still embodies a safe base for survival in adulthood and late adolescence. A safe and secured home serves as the main source of emotional, physical, and social well-being for all (Ridge, 2009). Participants confirmed this dream in their childhood memories.

5.1.2. Happy life

Although other participants grow up in poverty, for some their childhood was indicative of comfortable living where their essential material needs were met by their parents. Participants reported living in a secured, loving and supportive home environment. The understanding of happy life from the point of view of the participants highlighted their parents' income and financial stability of their family as responsible for their comfortable life. According to Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) family income or socioeconomic status can positively impact child and

adolescent well-being as well as influence their ability to achieve their future aspirations. Mayer (1997) buttressed this view point and state that family income is the single most important influence on children's life chance or how they eventually turn out. The result of this study do not completely concur with this one-sided idea. Financial conditions are important, but happy childhood experiences depended largely on parental and family caring.

Mayer (2002) investigated the influence of parental income on children's outcomes on cognitive test scores, socio-emotional functioning, mental health and behaviour problems, health, teenage childbearing, educational attainment and future economic status. The results revealed children from high income earning family are healthier, better behaved, happier and better educated during their childhood and wealthier when they grow up than children from impoverish background or families.

5.1.3. Childhood dreams

Participants indicated achievable and feasible dreams of what they want to become in future. Participant's childhood dreams were motivated by careers that are socially reputable. They relied on their intelligence in a particular school subject and on the one hand, their parents' profession influence the fulfilment of their aspirations. The desire to find something more rewarding and meaningful, as well as become a valued member of the society were important. They also wanted to make a positive difference between their country's cruel war and present safety to choose a career that will earn them a status and recognition. Participants of this study emphasized that their parents' profession played key role and had great impact on their career choice and future aspirations. Empirical research have shown that parent's profession and accomplishment has the capacity of influencing adolescent future aspirations and the manner they perceived their future (see, Neblett & Cortina, 2006). Neblett and Cortina, (2006) indicated that adolescent perception of parents' profession have significant impact for their preparation to adulthood.

5.2. Experience in war

5.2.1. Humiliation and Abuse

Generally, findings indicate that most participants were exposed and suffered considerable proportion of war-related abuses and atrocities. This present study seemed consistent with other previous empirical research conducted in Uganda (Schultz et al., 2012) and Rwanda (Neugebauer et al., 2008). Prevalent forms of violence exposed and suffered by the participants revealed that some were abducted and conscripted as child soldiers, and induced by drugs to “cry the battle cry”. Others had sexual assault such as rape, seeing dead bodies and wounded people, indiscriminate killings and witnessing loved ones being humiliated or battered. Similar results have been found in other studies (see, Dyregrov, Gupta, Gjestad & Mukanoheli, 2000; Jong, Mulhem, Ford, Van der Kam, & Kleber, 2000).

According to UNICEF (1996) children and adolescents caught in war zones are usually more likely as adults to become the victims of sexual assault, abductions, torture and killing. Since they are incapable or helpless to protect themselves they become increasingly vulnerable to violent and abusive attacks. Bryant and Ahearn (1999) in their study of the psychological consequences of displacement on children emphasized that witnessing traumatic event for instance torture and indiscriminate killings causes distress and pain as result of the danger it pose to the individual safety and wellbeing.

The effect of these war related violence on the victims are varied comprising both physical, emotional and behavioural challenges. A research by Amone-P'olak, Garnefski and Kraaij (2007) revealed that boys who experienced war and were physically abused in Northern Uganda exhibited signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. The physical abuse suffered by the participants of this study, have made them emotional and psychological scars in their hearts, which makes them suffer even after the war. For example, a participant revealed how her sister has vowed never to get married because she was gang raped. The reason being that as woman her pride has been soiled and therefore have develop a strong hatred for men and sexual affection. These forms of violation committed by warring factions is not solely orchestrated against the

individual but to a larger extent used as a weapon to dehumanize and to destroy family attachment and stability. Most participants reported in their bid to escape the violent abuses during the war and to flee into the bush, thus losing track of their loved ones and family members. Till to date some do not know the whereabouts of their family members.

Some participants revealed that their innocence was stolen when they were abducted as a child soldiers. A research by McMullen, O'Callaghan, Richards, Eakin and Rafferty (2012) measured the traumatic exposure and psychological distress among war-affected adolescents in Northern Uganda. Their results revealed that adolescents who were abducted were more likely to have developed PTSS, depression and anxiety-like symptoms than those who had been affected by the war but did not serve as 'child soldiers'. Similar to the findings of McMullen et al. (2012), participants who were abducted as child soldiers reported that the memories of violence continue to haunt them. More so the social rejection and stigma in Africa attached to victims adducted as child soldiers makes them feel guilty, shameful and goes a long way to delay their healing or recovery from their traumatic past. According to participants, their former positions as combatants dispel people from their companies, invariably putting them in distressful condition.

5.2.2. Impact of war on human development

First, some participants reported re-experiencing the long term memories and atrocities of the war. Similar results have been found by previous studies (see, Amone-P'Olak et. al., 2007; Neugebauer et al., 2008). Reliving the hurtful experience of the past usually happened both in the day and at night as they experience intrusive thoughts, images and flashbacks. Reliving or having a flashback of painful experience can be distressing, and the symptoms can make the adolescent victims to avoid people or withdraw as a way of coping. Some participants indicated at some point they were not interested in getting involved in any social activity or interact with their peers. Interest in activities they consider in the past as exciting diminished because their normal daily life or happiness in life were disrupted when these memories of painful past are triggered. Clinical observations by Punamäki (2000) indicated that Palestinian children (detained at 13-15

years of age) who were victims of violent and abusive attacks felt isolated and lonely, and reported that their peers could not understand and share their feelings.

Also frightening images, places and thoughts of the traumatic experience of the past may trigger feelings of despair, cause insomnia, nervousness, fear and anxiety. These underscore the findings of the study about some participants expressing apprehension and fear in returning to Liberia although their refugee status have been withdrawn and their country is now at peace. The reason being that the place remind them of their traumatic past and material possession lost.

Second, participants' war experience revealed greater personal loss, due to death of close family members or separation from parents, fleeing to a safe environment, leaving behind personal belongings, and loss of homes, protective and supportive communities. Previous studies (see, Geltman et al., 2005, Macksoud & Aber, 1996), found similar results. Participants considered being separated from their loved ones or losing a parent at a tender age due to war as an overwhelming experience. War disrupts children's attachment to adults due to parental concern and attention of the on-going war, and unfortunately, children interpret this new focus of their parents as a loss of care and lack of love (Barbara, 2006). When the loss is immense it could cause emotional strain and render the child defenceless. One participant reported that "I have not been able to recover from the death of my mother". To the child losing a family or loved ones goes beyond just the loss of the nuclear part of their relations. Instead, it represents an extended heritage loss, a forfeiture of the ethnic base which serves as a support base and a guide to life (Bryant & Ahearn, 1999).

Some participants emphasized that they found it difficult to relate to people because they did not trust anybody. Losing your parent or being separated from them in war has the capacity to influence the adolescents' future development of forming intimate relationships with others. This means that their fundamental inner sense of security and secured base is shattered. There is the tendency to mistrust people and develop the apprehension for relational contact. Except if a new relationship is built with a caregiver or a protective adult, the adolescent is likely to experience serious difficulties in psychosocial adjustment. Traumatic war experiences without social and

cultural healing can cause greater risk and severely challenge development throughout the stages of life (see, Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Okello et al., 2014).

Third, results revealed that participants' hopes for education were disrupted by the war either by the loss of their parents or benefactors or loss of material wealth. The war thereby restricted their capability to finance their education. Their right to attend school in a conducive environment and develop skills for future success were restricted. This is consistent with other previous studies (see, Khamis, 2005). War unavoidably has a negative consequence upon social amenities, and education is no exception. The interviewees of this study regarded education as fundamental for bringing security, determination and support in their lives (Kuterovac & Kontac, 2002). Having the opportunity of going to school or getting vocational training can act as a psychosocial support that can restore hope, joy and sense optimism about the future among adolescence who have been emotionally and often physically overwhelmed by the horrors of war. To the participants having the opportunity to go to school contributed in reducing anxiety and pains that is associated with their experience of war.

Participants reported that gaining admission at the university and having the opportunity to undergo training had brought them contentment and was often the turning point in their lives. Failure not to have the opportunity to go to school hamper the attainment of adolescent childhood dreams. Young people from refugee backgrounds are often remarkably motivated to achieve academically and can feel immense pressure to catch up with their peers in the host city. According to Punamäki et al., (2011) good academic accomplishment is recognized both as a decisive determinant and consequence of child resilience. Also having the opportunity to go to school help victims of war establish a bond with their peers and teachers. This help them to cope with their loss and act as a protection against depressive symptoms (see, Betancourt et. al, 2008; Hansanovic et al., 2005, Fazel & Stein, 2002). Finally the participant saw education as an opportunity of rebuilding their lives for future challenges outside the camp.

Fourth, participants' reported that living in environment fraught with material deprivation and hardships caused them distress. The data indicated that some have adapted to conditions at the camp, others have also struggled as it have restricted their personal ambitions and goals. These

challenges they faced daily in the refugee camp serve as constant reminders of material and personal belongings that were lost during the war. Pipher (2002) observation of displaced people indicated that because of the hardships and scarcity that persist in the refugee camps the survivors continue to experience traumatic memories. In refugee conditions people are deprived of things that are considered essential attachments in life, for instance material wealth and possession, culture and friends, yet they are hard to people to give up (Oakes, 2002). These conditions have forced few adolescents to indulge in self-destructive activities like prostitution (survival sex) for financial support. This is in line with previous findings from Mullan et al., (2002). In their time of hardship, most refugees tend to shoulder extra socio-economic responsibilities in their bid to make decent lives for themselves and their dependants. Experiencing hardship has the potential of increasing protection risk. Also economic condition can be an underlying factor for adolescents to engage in unsafe or exploitative means of earning income. The decrease in livelihood often following displacement coupled with extreme hardship have thrown some into the state of despair and hopelessness about the future.

Finally, regardless of their traumatic past, data revealed that some participants have been resilient regaining control of their lives rather than having their lives dictated by adverse circumstance. This consistent with other previous research conducted (see, Punamäki et al., 2011; Punamäki 2001). Resilience among war affected children is when they demonstrated socially acceptable behaviour and emotional adjustment, despite exposure to considerable risk (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). For some participants reading the bible and going to church help them to cope with their traumatic experience. Religious activities and beliefs assist in strengthening individuals and help them to be resilient (Farley, 2007). It further creates a supportive social connections and bond for individuals. Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello and Koenig (2007) reported religion and spirituality help traumatized individuals to find their sense of purpose, meaning and coping. Bates, Luster, Johonson, Quin and Rana (2013) assessed resilience among undefended Sudanese refugee youth. Their results indicated that due to individual attributes (such as intelligence, religious faith,), supportive peer relationship, community and cultural support the children demonstrated resilience and positive adaptation

Although participants have been resilient in coping with their traumatic past, data revealed that many have constructed their philosophy of life based on their experience in war, the difference in livelihood between them and their age mates in the host nation as well as the extreme conditions confronting them at the refugee camp. They considered the world as a wicked place based on this experience. Berger & Weiss (2002) emphasized that trauma causes emotional distress and have the capacity to affect the individual perspective and outlook on many things.

5.3. Adolescent view of the future

War disrupts the future development of children and adolescents. They have to endure the pain, separation and the loss of loved ones. The suffering of losing their parents and teachers whom they had depended on can be devastating, as they also have lost the ones to guide them through life. This makes it more challenging for the adolescent to view the future with the sense of hope and optimism (Bragin, 2012).

5.3.1 Hopes and Ambition

First, participants expressed high hopes, ambition, and greater optimism about achieving a desirable future for themselves and their country, despite the challenging circumstances they are faced with in the refugee camp and their traumatic past experience. This is congruent with other empirical findings (see, Chang & Sanna, 2003; Seginer, 2008). Living in a refugee camp would be a determinant factor or antecedent to the realizations of your future aspirations. It becomes more difficult or close to impossible when as an adolescent your life is disrupted by war. But Ingleby, (2005) reckoned that large number of people affected by war capability to function in life to greater extent is not adversely impacted by war.

Although the war has altered their childhood dreams but most often crisis can create opportunities and thus the challenge these participants have taken up. Participants' future aspiration and sense of optimism was largely influenced and driven by their experience of hardship, the desire to improve their circumstances and become agents of social transformation

and change in Liberia. Some indicated they wanted to become social activist and others too desired in serving humanity. Few privilege participants who are lucky to get scholarship from international and local organizations in this study are in the university seeking professional educational and others in vocational training especially the females

Finally, data indicated that few of the participants displayed pessimism and bleak view of the future, accepting that they can do nothing to improve or change their lives. The findings is consistent with Chang and Sanna (2003). These adolescents seemed to remain deeply scarred about their troubled past and helpless to change the challenging everyday realities of refugee life. Living conditions at the refugee camp are extremely poor and the prospects for the inhabitants not very good. Some are still without access or opportunity to education and lacked support to better their lots. Living in a state of uncertainty with limited or no access to education made the participants pessimistic. They felt they are without opportunities to exercise their choice of sustenance, or cannot do something meaningful for themselves, and saw no immediate or long-lasting solution to their predicaments. The despondency is due to their lack of capability to influence their own abilities by creating an achievable life plan for themselves (Kaplan, 1996).

5.4. Role and preconditions for forgiveness

Although the participants have suffered greater loss, their traumatic past experiences have not hindered them to extend a touch of forgiveness to their perpetrators. Results of the present study revealed religious faith (Christianity), apology, justice, personal choice and influence of political figures as basis for participants to grant forgiveness for their persecutors, enemies, and wrongdoers.

5.4.1 Religious Belief

First, the findings from the participants' subjective war experience revealed that some were motivated to forgive their perpetrators based on their religious faith. This is consistent with earlier studies (see, Enright & group, 1992; McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2000;

Wade & Kidwell 2010). Wade and Kidwell (2010) have also suggested that people who are more devoted to their religion, are more inclined to follow the principles of their faith, and also more willing to forgive their offenders.

The teachings of Christian doctrine clearly spell out the importance of forgiveness. Forgiveness is ingrained in the life of God and extend into the life of humankind and society in general. Participants reported that they forgave their perpetrators because they wanted to enhance their relationship with God. This findings is consistent with previous studies (see, Wade & Kidwell 2010). As God forgive people, Christians are admonished to care deeply about love and mercy (Auerbach, 2005). Some participant were enjoined to exhibit these compassionate feelings through forgiveness to their wrongdoers without preconditions even when the person is unworthy of it. This affirms the conclusions of (Enright et. al, 1992; Rye et al, 2000). People that have been forgiven by God should exhibit something Christ like when offended, without even waiting for their offenders to ask for forgiveness (Graham 2003; Wade & Kidwell, 2010). Failure to forgive as Christian others their wrong is a serious sin in itself according to Applegate, Cullen and Ven (2000). Jesus Christ further admonished his followers to live above their hurts and demands of them not only to “love their enemies” but also to “pray for those who persecute them.”

Finally, participants posited employing religious strategies such as attending church service, praying and reading the bible helped them to forgive their perpetrators whiles bringing relief, peace and contentment to them. With these Wuthnow (2000) revealed that small established groups in the church such as prayer groups and bible study groups help facilitate the forgiveness of others and to heal relationships. Krause and Ellison (2003) buttressed this view by emphasizing that the bible study groups and prayer groups contribute useful lessons that motivate individuals who are wronged to have a forgiving attitude towards their offenders.

5.4.2 Apology

Despite the fact that some participants based forgiveness on religious beliefs, others demanded that their offenders showed remorse, genuinely and sincerely apologize for the wrongful act

committed against them before they could forgive. This findings is congruent with previous studies of (see, Allan & Allan 2000, Allan et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 1997; Robbennolt, 2003). Given the evidence that they were victims who had experienced enormous brutalities and atrocities during the war, it is not unexpected that some of the respondents were adamant to grant forgiveness to their offenders.

Taft's (2000) surmised that unless victims of human right violation recognize and appreciate an apology as sincere and genuine it will not inspire the forgiveness process. Subsequently, the healing victims search for in order for reconciliation to take place will not happen. When offenders apologize for their injustice committed against their victims without being remorsefully sincere, real forgiveness process does not commence. Insincere apology is demeaning, and undermine the moral objectives that are the preconditions to reconciliation. It further indicates that the offender does not recognized the pain of the victim as legitimate enough to put their feelings before their own when they apologize to them. According to Wagner (2000) a thoughtful apology therefore can heal wounds and repair a broken relationship. On the contrary a thoughtless apology to him may stir up negative emotions which may ignite further acrimony and retaliatory tendencies .Offender expressing genuine remorse is key to neutralizing those negative emotions for a more conciliatory behaviour by the victim. Victims show considerable interest and details to the perpetrators perceived sincerity in expressing apologies (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2004)

Participants demand for apology before being ready to forgive can be attributed to several reasons. First, when offenders who subjected them to all forms of abuse apologizes, they are acknowledging the inappropriateness of their inhumane act committed against them and expressing regret for their reprehensible deeds. This will give the participants the assurance and rebuild the lost trust that they will further desist from similar wrongful act in the near future. Research have revealed that victims are more hopeful that transgressors will not repeat the same offence and they have positive outlook about their character when they genuinely apologize (see, Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Gold & Weiner, 2000)

Second, the participants will see the expression of the apology by their offenders as a recognition of their moral worth and restoration of their dignity that was trampled upon during the war. This means that the offender has demonstrated that the individuals they violated their rights are important to their own wellbeing. Their acceptance and treatment in the community they live is dependent on their victims accepting their apologies and forgiving them. Failure of the offenders not to recognize the victims as human beings who have experienced much pain and deserve apology is an affront to their dignity that was undermined and a threat to social cohesion. A victim will therefore find it challenging to genuinely accept the apology of the offender and forgive him or her if their feelings of self-worth and dignity are not restored (Scobie & Scobie, 1998).

Third, when offenders apologize, they unreservedly demonstrate their imperfection as rational beings; who are susceptible to errors, thereby reducing the victim's resentment and causing them to develop a fellow feeling or be empathetic to them. Victims having empathetic and compassionate feelings towards the perpetrators can foster forgiveness. Empirical evidence has shown that having empathetic feelings towards the offender is the only psychological variable that has the capacity to increase the likelihood of forgiveness in studies (McCullough et al., 1997, Worthington, Sandage & Berry, 2000). Finally an apology carries acceptance of responsibility by the offender for the human rights violations and its associated undesirable acts on the victims. It also conveys the aspirations to reconciliation, rebuilding of social harmony and peaceful coexistence.

5.4.3 Justice

Apology or show of remorse assist the process of forgiveness but few participants demanded justice as a condition to forgive their offenders. This was consistent with previous studies conducted (see, Exline et al., 2003; Pankhurst, 1999). Each individual is endowed with a thoughtful sense of moral judgment that enforces them to seek redress for the injustice or wrongful violation of their human rights. Above the need of holding one responsible for the crime committed against you and meting out punishment, justice in this regard appreciates the

values of both the victim and the transgressor and seek to repair their humanness and give back their self-respect (Botman, 1997). It further established the moral order, thereby increasing the victim's feelings of safety and security (Staub, 2005).

Second, retributive justice and seeking punitive measures to wrongdoing oftentimes create a situation whereby it gives the victims the satisfaction, reassurance and the psychological healing that the perpetrators have been dealt with. Meaning justice can be a therapy for healing from the past hurts but with the Liberian situation most of the perpetrators remain unpunished. It also creates some equity in the relationship between the offender and the offended. Therefore the victim can let go of his or her resentment and hatred and embrace a new future.

Third, although it is imperative for victims who have suffered inhumane acts to get justice but retributive justice cannot bring back what the victims especially war survivors have lost during the civil unrest. The magnitude of the victims' losses might be severe and leave lasting impact on their psychological wellbeing. They are the results of systematic human rights violations which include sexual torture, indiscriminate killings, forced abductions, loss and separation from family, destruction and denial of education and war-related poverty. For instance, in the case of the former president of Liberia (1999-2003) Charles Taylor and his allies who were jailed by the international court of justice, their imprisonment only quenches the taste of revenge for the victims they committed war crimes against. Apart from the victims getting even by the punishment of the perpetrators nothing more is gained.

Finally, there is a likelihood that retributive justice may adversely undermine the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. This may sow seeds of discord and in the near future trigger violence which will eventually undermine communal harmony and peaceful coexistence. By seeking justice as a condition for forgiveness we risk creating an unceasing cycle in which forgiveness would never be granted because our conditions and demands would never be met if offenders are not punished. Eventually the victims' failure to forgive their perpetrators by setting conditions for it means he or she denies himself or herself the opportunity from being liberated and healing through forgiveness.

5.4.4. Personal choice

Even though some participants were motivated to forgive based on their religious inclination and few ask for sincere apology and justice as a condition to forgive. Results revealed forgiveness was born out of personal choice and expression of affection and compassion to the perpetrators by few participants. This is in line with previous research by Enright and the human development study group (1991). Forgiveness and the absence of it have significant effect for both the victim and the transgressor. Being subjected to abuse and torture can have detrimental consequence on the victim's psychological wellbeing. Participants revealed taking the offence so personal that they started blaming themselves for the hurtful act experienced, felt ashamed for the lost dignity and a dent on their pride as human beings. However in the victim's offended pride, the offense grows much greater than he or she should allow. It becomes an issue of personal attack rather than an honest mistake or flash of insensitivity on the part of the offender.

Findings of the research indicated participants reported that refusal to forgive and deal honestly with their hurtful feelings and allowing it to fester in their hearts can affect their health or lead to depressive symptoms. This affirms findings of previous research by (Gallo & Matthews, 2003; Lawler et al., 2003; Toussant et al., 2001; Witvliet 2001). That is the growing sense of irritation has the capacity to spread through the victim's heart and body like an infection. It has been rightly said that bitterness is like a poison that you prepare for someone else and then drink yourself. While it silently destroys the victim's life, the offender remain completely unaware of our dark feelings. Individual desire to forgive leads to improve psychological (Krause & Ellison 2003), physical (Gallo & Matthews, 2003), emotional (Berry et al, 2001) and behaviour benefits (Freedman & Knupp, 2003). Forgiveness therefore restores the victim to wholeness thereby transforming the individual from a victim to a survivor (Graham, 2003). Demonstrating that the victim has gained his or her sense of interior freedom and has overcome the hurtful experience of the past.

5.4.5. Influence of revered leaders

Finally few participants reported they were encourage to forgive because of they want to emulate revered and influential leaders who suffered enormous injustice but ultimately forgave their perpetrators. For instance, the personality and deeds of Nelson Mandela is a source of inspirational to some of the participants to forgive their perpetrators. The narratives of Nelson Mandela's experience resonate with the Africa process of forgiveness especially Ubuntu that serve as the guiding principle for South Africa truth and reconciliation. The traditional African way of understanding forgiveness emphasize on the continuous desire in humans for bonding, and the longing to coexist in harmony with each other in a community. Meaning when conflict arises the immediate goal is to restore social harmony in the community to avoid the continuous cycle of recrimination and revenge. The forgiver looks out to dwell in a peaceful relations with other members. According to McCullough, (2000) posited that "forgiveness often leads to the restoration of relational closeness following a transgression, thus helping people maintain a more stable network of supportive relationships"

What underlines African tradition is showing affection for people and living in accordance with accepted standard of conduct or norms in the community. It thrives on collective solidarity and this Nguni adage "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" meaning I am because we are clearly highlight that (Tutu, 1999). The desire for an offended person to forgive is necessitated by the common humanity or the common ancestry and compassion for the perpetrator. It is only when the offended come to that realization that his or her life is wielded together in the bond of social relation with the offender and a part of the moral community that he or she would be motivated to forgive to foster goodwill, care and love in the community. Ultimately the transgressor is, one of us; and shared membership from a family or clan in the human community. Therefore their ability for rational transformation give us the motivation to forgive the offender and accept them back into the larger society of moral agents (Govier, 1999).

Forgiveness therefore seek to neutralize victims thirst for revenge to prevent the cycle of violence. Although according to Amegashie and Runkel (2012) the yearning for revenge appears to be a common human trait. One must bear in mind as this African proverb admonishes "*taking*

revenge is often to sacrifice oneself". Meaning you only inflict more pain to yourself if you tread on the path of vengeance. This goes a long way to undermine future relationship between members in the society. Opoku (2012) underscore this view point in an African adage by stating *"if we do not forget yesterday's quarrels, we will not have somebody to play with tomorrow"*. It simple advise people that forbearance is an element in the effort towards peaceful coexistence. Harmonious living in a community is necessary for the growth of the group therefore it is considered imperative for the individual to let go of personal hurt and forgive for the general wellbeing and future peace of the society.

5.5. Limitations of the study

The present study applied a qualitative approach that provides possibility for rich knowledge and in-depth analysis of the participants' war experiences. However, generalizing the findings beyond the sampling frame must be done with great circumspection. The interviews were conducted among Liberian young adults who were as children forced to settle as refugees in Ghana. They still lived in a refugee camp in Buduburam, where the study was conducted. The findings of this study can only be applied based on the African youth who are exposed to this unfortunate political and military turmoil. The researcher's data collection was limited to one local area because access to the participants was dependent on people's willingness to help. Qualitative approach aims at deepening the understanding, but due to the great investment in interviews, only a small group could be studied. Collecting the interviews from different parts of Ghana and among refugee youths living in different environments and social context would have enriched the narratives. Even making comparison would have been possible, and that would have revealed a considerable variation of stories or different experiences.

One major limitation the researcher faced in conducting this research was time constraint. The researcher had limited time on the field, and interviews were done mainly in one time. Therefore the researcher did not have substantial time to explore different facets of the participants' everyday life, human relations, and activities. The fieldwork lasted one month during which the researcher also organized the study and established a rapport with participants and other

inhabitants of the Buduburam refugee community. A more ‘anthropological’ approach, i.e., living with the community of the participants would have extended the understanding of the phenomenon. It took time for the participants to open up for the actual research process to begin due to mistrust of people living outside the camp. Enough time is therefore needed to enhance future research.

To understand a phenomenon or explore a social context a research must observe their participants in their living environment for a substantial period of time. To accomplish that the researcher visited some participants in their homes, partake in some games with the males and observe especially the female participants undertaking their vocational practical’s’. In spite of all that, participant observation over a longer period of time would have proven invaluable in understanding their general wellbeing and conditions at the refugee camp. The researcher would have gain in-depth understanding of how they behave or interact with their peers in their everyday environment, how they are coping with their traumatic past in that social context and finally how they are dealing with the challenging conditions that confronts them at the camp. Therefore researcher will prepare in future to give himself ample time in observing the participants in their natural setting for a considerable period.

Finally, in spite of the high level of disclosure by interviewees, their narration of their war experience or response styles might have caused some bias. This could have resulted in participants reporting less of what they actually experienced or reporting the event with great emphasis. Basically, their interview response could be biased due to bitterness or emotions that stem from their experiences in war. Yet, we were in fact interested about these ‘biases’, the early traumatic war experiences can colour all later experiences, and in qualitative science the subjective is valuable.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0. CONCLUSION

This study focused primarily on answering the research question: what is it like to live as an adolescent in war? To answer this question, a phenomenological trip was made to Budumburam refugee camp in Ghana, where over thirty thousand (30,000) people have since 2002 been living as refugees. This concluding chapter is an attempt to ascertain whether or not the study achieved its aim. It also establishes the contributions or otherwise of the study to the existing body of knowledge relative to the impact of war on adolescent, forgiveness and future prospect. Concentrating on answering the above research question task,

- Explore how young adults construct their childhood and adolescence that was shadowed by war and persecution?
- Explore how these war survivors view the future?
- Examine the role forgiveness plays in the lives of war victims or survivors?

Childhood memories before the war

Findings from participant's accounts of their childhood memories before the war reveals the challenges of living under conditions of poverty and deprivation. Poverty was conceived by the participants as a circumstance where they were deprived of basic human needs due to parental unemployment and large number of children their parents did have due to polygamy. The experience of poverty in childhood affect strongly every aspect of the people's lives from material hardships, through social and attainment of their future aspirations.

The study also revealed that other participants before the war were living a life of comfort where their basic needs were met by their parents. Parental income according to participants accounted for their living in comfort. Many studies have demonstrated that parental income have profound implications for their children subjective wellbeing and life chances (see, Mayer 1997).

Childhood dreams

Participant's childhood dreams, which were largely attainable, were inspired by participants' personal intelligence, societal prestige and parent's profession. There was also the quest to find occupations that were gratifying and productive so as to be socially accepted and contribute to development. Further, parents' professions played essential roles in determining the children's' choices.

Experience in war

The survey results revealed that almost all the participants exposed to the civil war were subjected to several forms of physical torture and abuse. The most common abuse and humiliation reported by the participants were abduction and conscription as child soldiers, sexual assault, and indiscriminate killings, witnessing loved ones being tortured or battered. This is consistent with study of Dyregov et al., (2000). They found that Rwandan children who were caught up during the genocide were exposed to greater levels of violence and witnessed the death of close relations or loved ones and others in massacres, as well as being subjected to other violent infractions and abuse.

Impact of war on human development

The data indicated participants' exposure to war atrocities was associated with high degree of psychological distress including intrusive memories, disturbing thoughts, as well as nightmares. War affected adolescents, when faced with reliving the original traumatic war event, may experience so much distress, despair and restlessness that they become overwhelmed. Failure to withdrawn physically from this situation may cause them to react in various ways like dissociate themselves from their peers or sometimes overreacting to situations. The results corroborate Amone-P'Olak (2009) findings that children who were tortured in rebel captivity in Northern Uganda reported high avoidance activities, intrusive thoughts and images besides hyper-arousal symptoms.

The study reported that loss of parents or loved ones was one of the most severe events for the participants causing them deep grief. Empirical evidence have revealed that children exposed to war experience the separation from family, a situation that tend to cause disruption in their primary relationships and their general wellbeing. Quality care is the most essential protective resource to help the adolescents to cope with their traumatic war experience. Results has confirmed that a secure relationships with trusted caregivers, caring adults, and supportive community contribute to resilience in war (Punamäki et al. 2011; Quota et al. 1995)

One particularly damaging impact of war revealed by the study was the disruption of participant's education. During war or extensive armed conflict, education is all too often one of the first casualties due to children's insecurity and lack of affordability caused by death of a parent or loss of material resources. The adolescents trapped in war or affected by war often risk missing out education, thus failing the opportunity to fulfil their potentials. Education is therefore fundamental in enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing and bring a sense of normalcy to children whose lives have been disrupted by war (Basic Education Coalition, 2011).

The present study identified that participants having the chance to go through vocational training and gaining admission to university was a turning point in their life. Education was seen as an important protective factor to develop resilience. Having the opportunity of going to school was seen as embracing the future with a sense of purpose and hope. It also accorded them the means to not only improve their quality of life but also a prospect of becoming useful to their country. Researchers have found that educational attainment increase conflict risk (see, Winthrop & Graff, 2010)

The study reported that participants are confronted with extreme hardship and material deprivation causing them distress. Their condition at the camp is negatively affecting their future aspirations and dreams. This is consistent with a study by Goodman (2004) who found out that unaccompanied Sudanese refugee experienced extreme hardship and starvation at the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Living in that hardship and extreme deprivation have caused some to engage in exploitative sexual relationships either by commercial prostitution as means of survival.

Data analysis indicated that even in the midst of situations of extreme hardship and potential trauma some participants have been resilient. Religious activities including going to church, reading the bible and praying was seen as an important protective resource in helping the participants to be resilient and coping with their traumatic past. Studies have shown that war affected victims employ religious activities as a way of psychological recovery (see, Boothby et al, 2006).

Adolescent view of the future

The current findings suggest that even in the heat of challenging circumstances, some participants expressed high sense of optimism and envision a better future for themselves and their country. Some have aspirations of becoming social activist and others are encouraged to serve humanity. It is of great social importance to see young adult refugee not as helpless and passive victims without capabilities but as survivors with social prospect who are inspired with their ability to embrace the future with hope and a motivation to attain greater heights.

Whiles other participant have demonstrated resilience and have high hopes about the future others view the future with sense of pessimism. Lack of opportunities, limited or no access to education and extreme deprivation at the camp have rendered others helpless and finds no meaningful purpose in life. Adolescents who were able to survive the torrent of the civil war represent the future generation of Liberia. Therefore great attention must be given to these survivors in order to restore a sense of optimism about their future and to prevent them from becoming a burden to society. Lack of support and opportunities to better their lives will lead to a generation of young adults who are at the risk of being manipulated and exploited thereby increasing the risk of future instability in their country.

Role and preconditions for forgiveness.

Forgiveness help in diminishing the pain that results from injustice and unlawful persecution thereby liberating the individual from an identity as a victim (Staub, 2006). According to

response gathered from the study, participant's religious faith emerged as a medium to forgive their perpetrators for the wrongful act committed against them. The participants therefore believe as Christian their reluctance and unwillingness to forgive means a breakdown in one's communion or spiritual union with God. Consistent with the position of Adonis (1999) that states that Christian beliefs and values provide an imperative not only to forgive but also to leave above your hurtful feelings and re-establish a loving relationship when possible even with your enemy.

Participant also indicated more willingness to forgive their perpetrators who expressed sincere remorseful apology. The victims of these atrocious act require signs of humaneness that a remorseful apology from their offenders can restore that. They need to regain their lost dignity and honour that was trampled upon during the war. Apology from an individual who have subjected you to severe torture and pain encourages forgiveness (see, McCullough et al., 1997). Conversely what is also essential is the offenders' action in apologizing. Victims pay a great deal of attention to the offender's perceived sincerity in expressing apologies. It will be synonymous to adding insult to injury if the offender is insincere. This study is therefore consistent with Taft's (2000) conclusion that to assist forgiveness and healing process apology must be than in accordance with acceptable social standards of conduct where the victims will feel the acknowledgment or appreciation of their pain by the offender.

Another aspect revealed by the study is some participants desire to seek justice as a condition to forgive. To forgive to the participant is not necessary to shelve justice. Their call for justice as a form of acknowledgement of their pain and to restore a moral and social order. Also as a means to discourage people in repeating the same offence and committing atrocities. The study support Staub (2006) position that forgiveness assist in restoring a victim's sense of justice, and further emphasized that it is essentially through this process that victims can stop harbouring resentments and start mending their relationship with the offender.

Forgiveness can be an individual decision according to Philpot, Balvin, Mellor and Bretherton (2013). The results of this study revealed, however, that participants arrived at forgiveness through many different ethical, personal, political, and ideological paths, personal decisions and consideration, regardless of the severity of human rights violations and atrocities that they had

suffered. They set aside potentially destructive feelings such as bitterness and hatred towards their offenders, in order to have a new beginning. This is supported by earlier research, for instance (Scobie & Scobie, 1996). They emphasized that embracing a new future with a sense of hope and purpose is an important motivational force in a person's decision to forgive.

Finally, the study illustrated that participant's motivation to forgive was essentially to imitate revered leaders like Nelson Mandela for his stance of non-vengeance and non-bitterness against the people who subjected him to injustice and inhumane act. Here what is important is recognizing the common humanity with the perpetrators and loving them despite their imperfections and flaws. The motivation for forgiveness is that the offender is of the same kind as the victim, and are members of the same moral community. It is therefore those whom we regard as members of common ancestry and shared humanity that we can possibly forgive.

In concluding, the participants have not had apology from their perpetrators whiles justice have not been fully being achieved. However they are trying to walk in the shoes of their role models who suffered similar injustices but forgave their offenders. They have also taken the personal decision to liberate themselves from the imprisonment of self-bitterness which have the ability to affect their life or jeopardize their progress in life. Moreover because of their religious faith they believe a commitment to forgive is a commitment to God.

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